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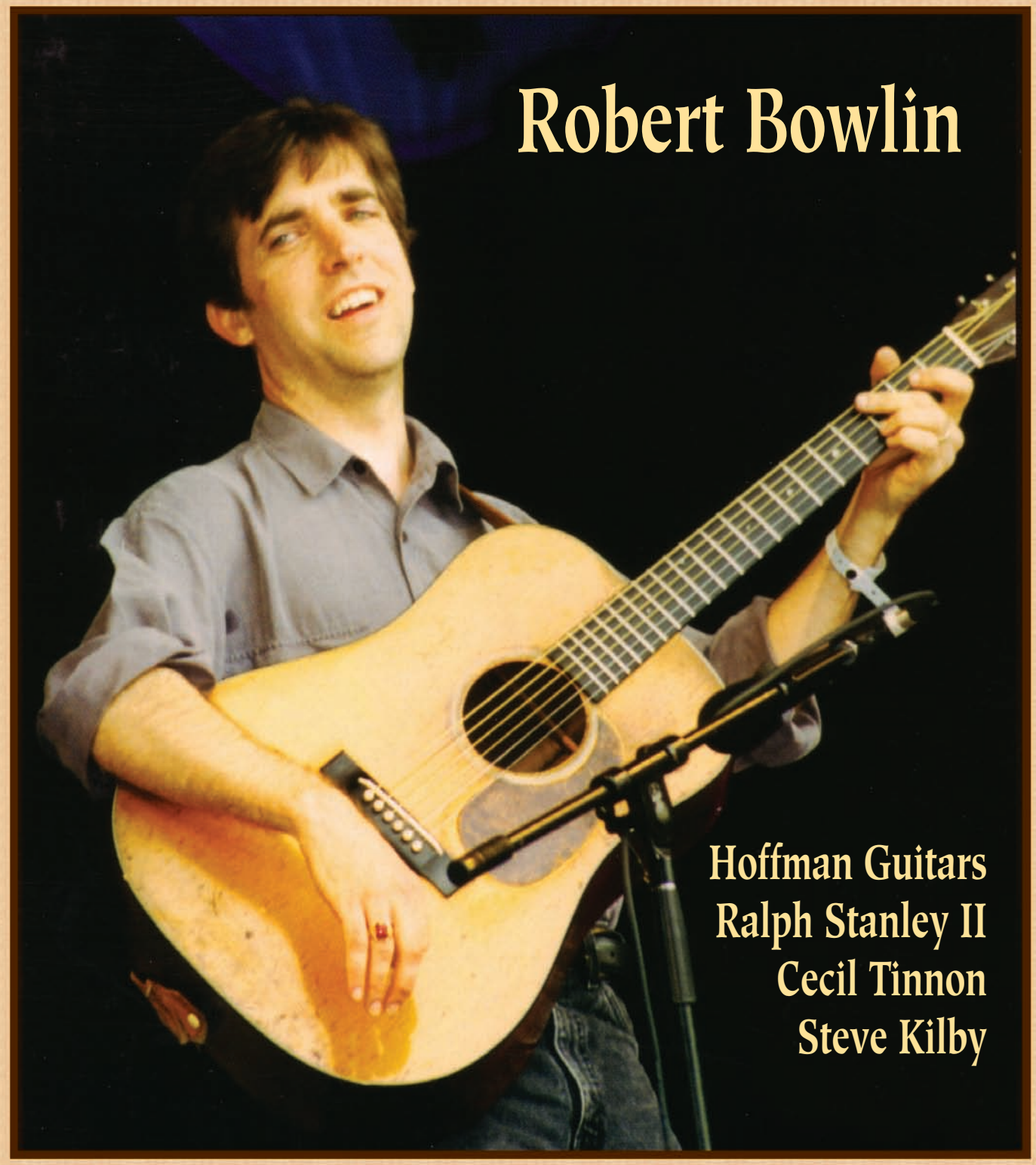
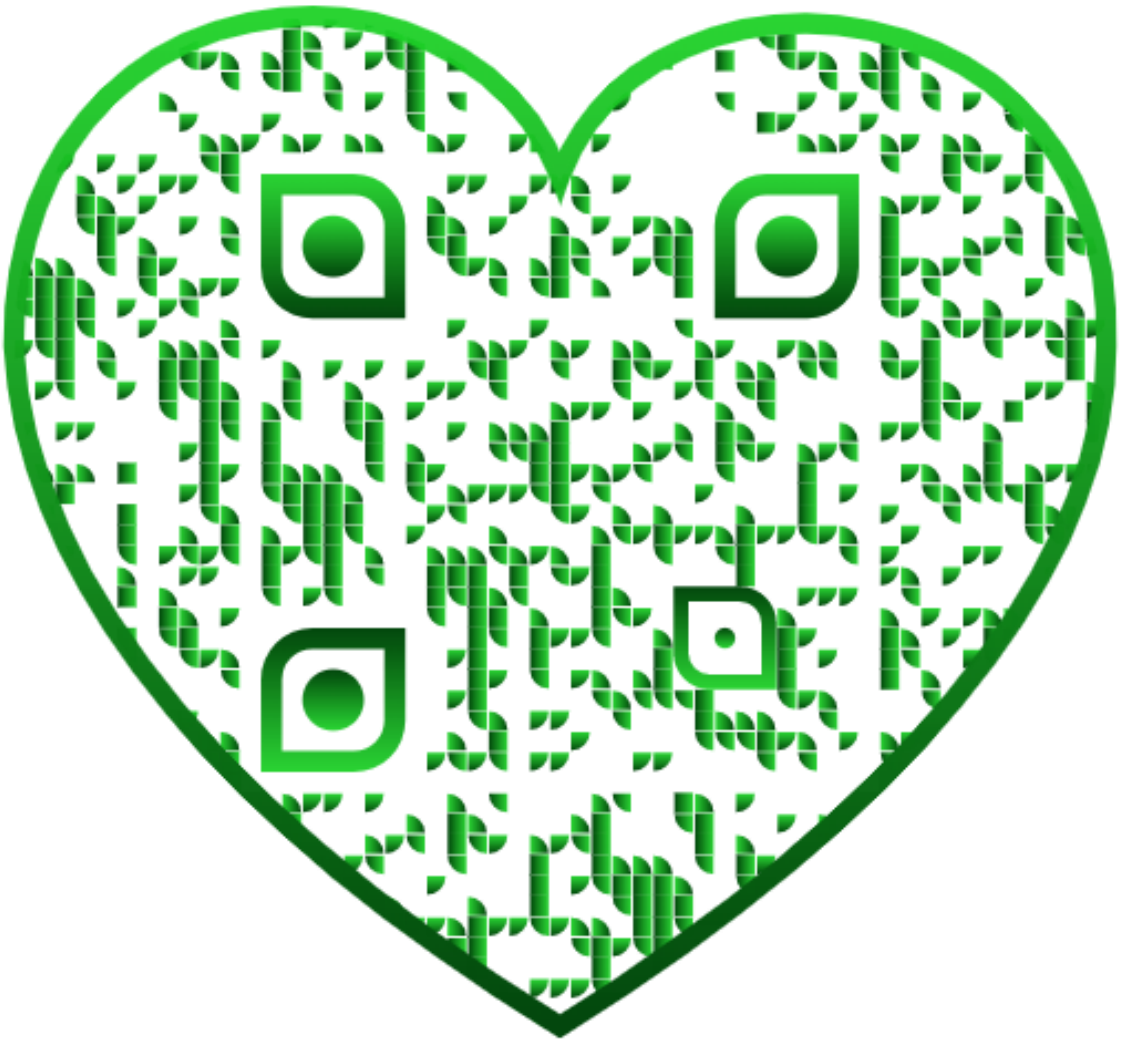
Volume 4, Number 6 September/October 2000





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1. **Send your music to radio.** No matter how you define your goals, you need to get your music to folk radio. One excellent way to do this is through a **radio-oriented sampler CD program**, such as the OASISACOUSTIC™ sampler CDs, which get the music of Oasis clients to hundreds of key radio stations throughout the U.S.

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EDITOR'S PAGE

Robert Bowlin

The name Robert Bowlin may not be as familiar to you as some of the other great flatpickers we have featured on our cover over the past four years, but those who do know him and have heard him play can tell you that he is as deserving of a cover story as any of the others we have featured. Before we started publishing this magazine I asked my contributors who they felt we should feature. Several brought up Robert's name and Dan Huckabee went on to tell me that he felt that Robert was the best guitar player he had every heard.

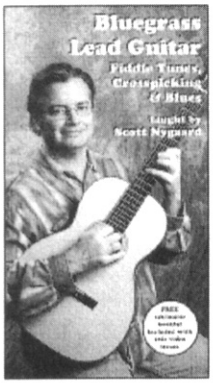
I first heard Robert play several years ago with Richard Greene at Rockygrass and have been trying to get a story about him into the magazine ever since. Joe Carr caught up with Robert to conduct the interview and here we have it. I hope you enjoy the article and Robert's contribution to our *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* audio CD.

Welcome Brance Gillihan

In late July we welcomed Brance Gillihan to our staff here at *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*. In addition to working on our web site, Brance will soon be taking over the engineering duties on our audio CD, as well as all future CD and video projects. When Brad Davis volunteered to help us out with the recording and engineering of our audio CDs over a year ago, it was understood that it would be a temporary arrangement and that we would eventually get our own facility here in Pulaski. It took us longer than I had hoped, but soon, with Brance's help and expertise, we will have our own studio up and running.

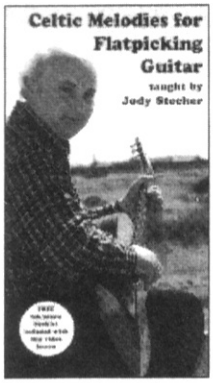
I was introduced to Brance about 10 months ago by Joe Carr. Brance graduated from both the audio engineering and video production programs at South Plains College and had done engineering work for some of Joe Carr and Alan Munde's various recordings and video projects. Since graduating from South Plains, Brance has attended Belmont University in Nashville where he was working on a degree in music business as well as running sound for various bands and working concessions on the road with Laurie Morgan.

If all goes well, we should have a great studio here in Pulaski with a talented engineer behind the mixing board by the first part of next year. Until then Brance will be our "webmaster" and he will be helping us out at the booth at IBMA and at the Roanoke Bluegrass Weekend. Come by and introduce yourself if you get the chance.



Bluegrass Lead Guitar
taught by Scott Nygaard

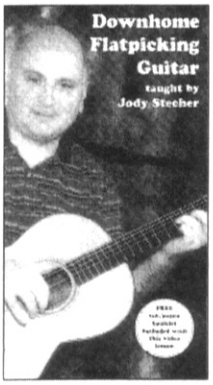
In this video, renowned guitarist Scott Nygaard guides you through the old-time fiddle tune *Little Billy Wilson*, a crosspicking arrangement of *Home Sweet Home*, a melodic solo on the blues song *Trouble in Mind* and shows you how to combine these influences when creating a solo on a bluegrass tune like *East Virginia Blues*. Scott explains in detail the techniques needed to master the bluegrass lead guitar style and the ideas behind his arrangements. All are clearly illustrated in split-screen close-ups. ***GW604 $29.95***



Celtic Melodies for Flatpicking Guitar
taught by Jody Stecher

The colorful tones of the guitar are well suited to the music of Ireland and Scotland. Jody Stecher has developed a unique approach to flatpicking Celtic music drawing on the sounds and techniques of the harp, fiddle and pipes. This video lesson presents a graded course starting with simpler fingering with special attention to picking techniques. Building on a base of a confident and deliberate right hand, more challenging left hand work is gradually introduced.

Titles include: ***Reel*** *Sheehan's Reel •* ***Jig*** *The Connaughtman's Rambles •* ***March*** *A Trip To Mabou Ridge •* ***Strathspey*** *The Devil In The Kitchen •* ***Reel*** *Muilleann Dubh •* ***Reel*** *Doctor Gilbert* ***GW605 $29.95***



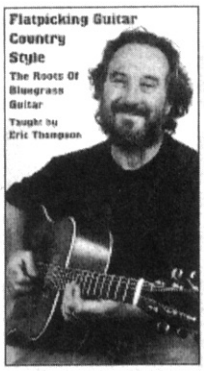
Downhome Flatpicking Guitar
taught by Jody Stecher

Jody Stecher has long been America's least generic flatpicker. This video is both a roadmap of Jody's development as a flatpicking guitarist of mostly American vernacular music, and a guide to how any flatpicker can expand their expressive technique. Think of it as *"Flatpicking According to Jody"*.

It's a graded course starting with basics in which the technical relationship between fingerpicking and flatpicking is made clear. The first few pieces are great songs with memorable melodies but minimal fingering so that right hand fundamentals can be mastered. With each new tune more techniques are introduced and more and more fingerboard is used, both horizontally and vertically. The second half of the video is purely instrumental music and the tunes are more complex.

Titles include: Carter's Blues, It's Hard To Love, I Got A Bulldog, Leake County Blues, Arkansas Traveler, The Dawn and The Ship in Full Sail ***GW606 $29.95***

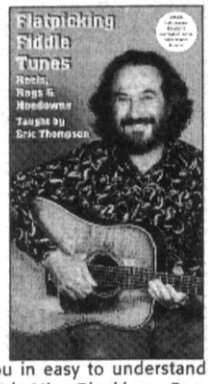
Flatpicking Guitar Country Style
The Roots of Bluegrass Guitar
Taught by Eric Thompson



Eric Thompson will have you flatpicking lead breaks in styles from Maybelle Carter to Doc Watson. You'll learn to pick out the melody to songs like *East Virginia Blues, Sad and Lonesome Day* and *Shady Grove*. You will learn to embellish your playing with "hammer-ons" and "pull-offs" for the real old-time country sound. You'll build a solid technique, advancing step-by-step through single note arrangements of *Thompson's Rag,* fiddle hoedowns *Arkansas Traveler* and *Soldier's Joy,* and a bluesy bluegrass break for *Good Old Mountain Dew* (employing slippery slides and hot runs). Eric's invaluable tips on left hand fingering and right hand pick technique are clearly illustrated in split-screen close-ups.

GW 601 $29.95

Flatpicking Fiddle Tunes
Reels, Rags & Hoedowns
Taught by Eric Thompson



Old-time fiddle tunes are the bedrock upon which acoustic guitar flatpicking is built. Eric Thompson's strong, melodic picking has set a benchmark for taste and tone for nearly four decades. In this video Eric shares soulful arrangements of seven of his favorites, guiding you slowly, line-by-line through classics like *Texas Gals, Fish In The Millpond,* Scottish-Irish rooted *Miller's Reel* and *Stony Point,* mountain modal *Falls of Richmond,* swingin' *Kennedy Rag* and the bouncy *East Tennessee Blues.* You'll build your repertoire and hone your technique, exploring fingering patterns in six different keys which are all clearly illustrated in split-screen close-ups. ***GW 602 $29.95***

Bluegrass Crosspicking Guitar
Taught by Eric Thompson

Crosspicking is an exciting flatpicking technique that is an essential part of every bluegrass guitarist's arsenal. Utilizing repeated patterns on three-string groups, crosspicking captures the bounce of a fiddler's double shuffle and the drive of three-finger banjo Scruggs-style rolls. Eric Thompson lays it out for you in easy to understand steps, illustrating the basic patterns with arrangements of *Fly Around My Pretty Little Miss, Blackberry Rag, Beaumont Rag, Wildwood Flower,* and *Cross-eyed Fiddler.* Split-screen close-ups let you see exactly what and how Eric is playing. ***GW 603 $29.95***

Beginner's Country Guitar
taught by Fred Sokolow

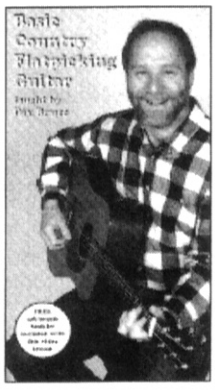
All you need to put over a good country song is your voice and a guitar. This video lesson gives you the tools you need to play old-fashioned country, honky-tonk and country rock. You'll learn how to play: Accompaniment strums for different rhythmic feels; a variety of first-position chords; bass runs; major scales; solos and turnarounds.

Tunes include: Blue Eyes Crying In The Rain, I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry, The Bottle Let Me Down, I'm Movin' On, Will The Circle Be Unbroken, Silver Wings and Jambalaya, ***GW407 $29.95***

Flatpicking Country Classics
taught by Fred Sokolow

In this 75 minute video Fred teaches nine standards every country picker/singer should know... from start to finish. You'll learn an intro for each song, a backup pattern and bass runs to play while singing, an instrumental solo, and an ending. Picking up where his *BEGINNER'S COUNTRY GUITAR* video left off, Fred keeps the arrangements fairly simple but includes a few up-the-neck chord positions and hot licks. You'll learn solos and runs in five different keys. Each song is played at regular speed and then slowed down on a split-screen that gives you a close-up look at the picking hand and the chording hand.

Tunes include: New San Antonio Rose, Wild Side of Life, Waltz Across Texas, The Race is On, Beautiful Kentucky Waltz, That's the Way Love Goes, I Don't Hurt Anymore, Someone I Used To Know and City of New Orleans ***GW410 $29.95***



Basic Country Flatpicking Guitar
taught by Dix Bruce

Hot guitar licks abound these days but simple melodies played along with chord strums on the low strings of the guitar have never lost their appeal. Pioneered in the 1920s by the great Mother Maybelle Carter, this combination of lead and rhythm guitar playing is the foundation upon which all traditional country, folk, bluegrass, and hot flatpicking guitar is based. In this video lesson Dix Bruce carefully teaches lead and backup guitar to nine great and classic country, bluegrass, and folk standards, ballads and hot breakdowns played by musicians the world over.

Tunes include: Worried Man Blues, Lonesome Valley, Storms Are On the Ocean, Handsome Molly, Wildwood Flower, Redwing, John Hardy, Jimmie Brown the Newsboy ***GW308 $29.95***

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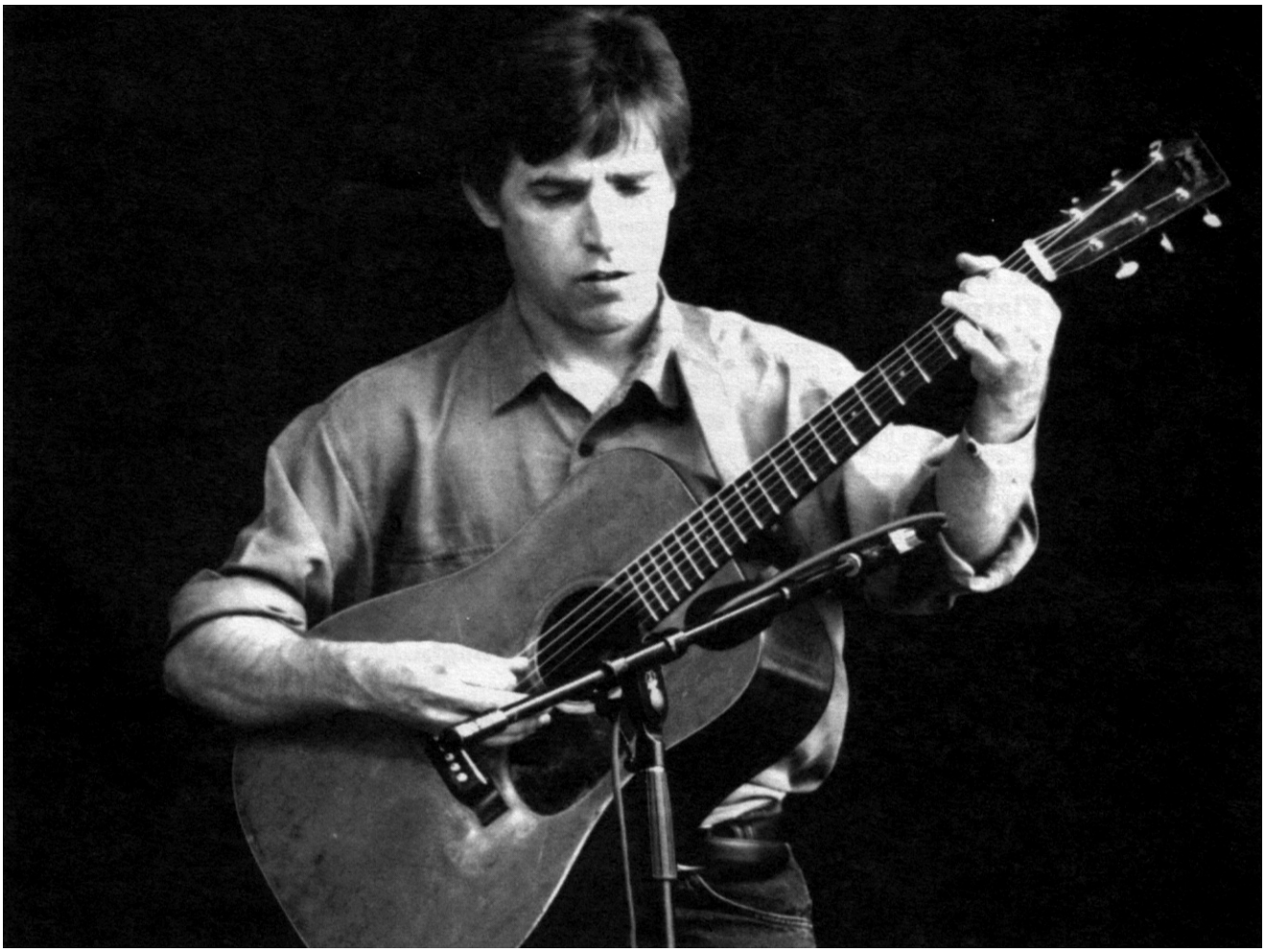
Robert Bowlin



Making music that makes other people sound good

by Joe Carr

You may have seen him playing guitar with Richard Greene or Kathy Mattea. Others will know him as Bill Monroe's last fiddle player, or as a past Winfield contest winner. Robert Bowlin's quiet, unassuming nature belies the fact that he is a world class musician, a multi-instrumentalist, and a monster player.

Although capable of breath-taking flashiness, Robert is best known for his tasty musical approach—that "just right" phrase that makes a song click. As a result, he is an active studio musician and a sought-after sideman who appears on guitar, mandolin, and fiddle with many well known contemporary performers.

Robert was born in the small town of Pocahontas, Arkansas, into a very musical family. Four aunts and uncles on his mother's side all played instruments as well as both his parents—his father played harmonica and guitar and his mother, piano. His older brother and sister also played music. Robert's uncle, Billy Rhodes, who now lives in El Paso, still plays fiddle and Robert remembers his melodic style and great tone on western and cowboy songs as well as popular standards of the 1940s. Robert's father played standard guitar instrumentals such as "Wildwood Flower" and "Under the Double Eagle" and rhythm accompaniment to old folk songs such as "Down in the Valley."

Robert's earliest memories are filled with music. The ukulele was his first instrument, which he started around the age of three or four. From the start, he played the ukulele with a flatpick. A cousin showed him a ragtime tune on the uke, which Robert still remembers. About this same time, Robert's sister began giving him piano lessons. Robert began learning these instruments by ear, but by age four, his sister started teaching him to read music. At age five, he graduated from his sister's teaching and began taking piano lessons from a teacher

in town. By this time he had grown big enough to switch to the guitar from the ukulele.

"I remember the very first time I played the guitar. I sat down on the couch and my Dad's guitar was sitting there and I picked it up . . . it was an archtop . . . and I tried to play ukulele chords on it and some of them would work and I was shocked and amazed . . . I never picked up the ukulele again."

By age six, Robert was quite a performer. He sang and accompanied himself on a banjo-ukulele. He performed five or six times a year at various functions including the local high school's variety shows. One song he remembers performing was "I've Been Working on the Railroad." During this period, Robert continued to take weekly piano and music theory lessons.

Robert was influenced by many kinds of music during these years. The classical piano music he was studying, of course, was important and his sister, who is ten years older, had an extensive collection of early rock and roll music including Elvis, Sam Cooke and others. He also continued to play country music with his family.

From ages five to eleven, Robert played his brother's cheap classical style guitar. This instrument had steel strings and very high action. At twelve, he got a Yamaha acoustic and was amazed at how much easier it was to play. Robert's first band outside his family was formed around this time. For this rock group, Robert borrowed his brother's three pickup Teisco Del Ray electric guitar.

Also around age twelve, Robert began to flatpick leads on the acoustic guitar. His first influences were Earl Scrugg's guitar work on Flatt and Scruggs recordings and later, Doc Watson. Doc's playing on the *Strictly Instrumental* album with Flatt and Scruggs made a big impression. He first heard Clarence White about a year later, when he got a copy of Eric Weisburg's *New Dimensions in Blues and Bluegrass*. [This great album features rhythm and solos by Clarence and was later re-released as the *Dueling Banjos* movie soundtrack.]

On a trip to Spain, Robert's parents purchased a custom built Flamenco guitar for him. Robert began a self-directed study of classical guitar, using his brother's three finger folk guitar style as a model. "Requerdos De Alhambra" struck Robert as one of the most beautiful pieces of music he had ever heard and he enthusiastically dedicated himself to classical guitar studies. His music reading ability served him well as he taught himself to play this demanding style. Meanwhile, he continued to study and compete on the piano. Robert modestly admits that during this time he won "several state piano competitions."

Robert entered the classical guitar program at Southern Methodist University in Dallas and continued studies until that program was closed down. Surprisingly, Robert's home-grown guitar technique was very close to the classical model and he required very little "correction" from instructors. He then went to the University of Arkansas and entered their classical guitar program which was also soon shut down. In order to finish a degree, Robert changed his major to Composition with piano as his performance instrument.

Robert went to the 1978 Walnut Valley Festival in Winfield, Kansas, and took second in the flatpicking contest (Steve Kaufman was the winner that year). The next year (1979), on a whim, Robert entered the fingerpicking contest at Winfield and won. Robert started out learning how to play the guitar with a flatpick, but had later become interested in fingerpicking when listening to his brother play Peter, Paul & Mary songs.

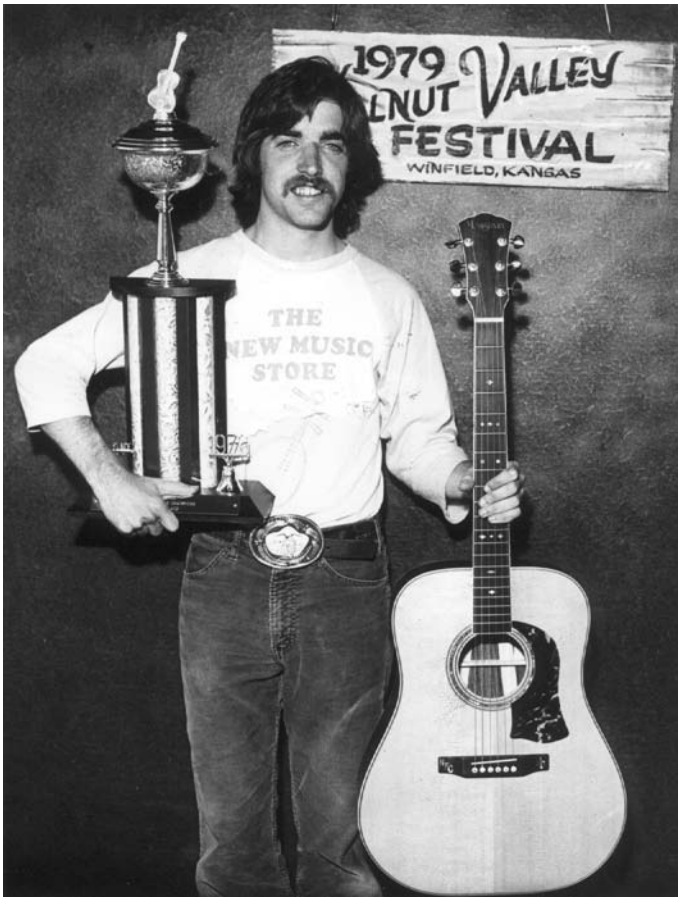
In addition to playing the guitar and piano, Robert is also an accomplished fiddle player. Both his sister and brother played the violin and Robert says that he became interested in that instrument around the age of 5 when he began "fooling around with it." Robert "got serious" about the fiddle for a while when he was about 14 and again when he was 17. Between the ages of 22 and 23, Robert says he spent "hundreds of hours" on the fiddle.

At a festival in Oklahoma, Robert met Oklahoma mandolinist Bobby Clark. The two struck up a friendship and eventually played in three bands together over the next three years. The first group, Southern Select, played throughout Texas and Oklahoma in several chains of restaurants and bars. This first group re-formed into Western Flyer and ultimately into Southern Manor. This last group relocated to Nashville in order to be more centrally located to bluegrass performance venues.

One of Robert's first recording experiences was on Bobby Clark's 1980 *One Legged Gypsy* album. This debut album was recorded in Fort Worth for Slim Richey's Ridge Runner label. The tunes are all Clark originals ranging from bluegrass to jazz. Robert played both guitar and fiddle on these recordings with memorable results. His solos were lyrical and musical, played with a full robust tone that stands out even 20 years after they were recorded. "I was in my Django period then," he remembered. The guitar solo on the title tune particularly reveals the Django Reinhardt influence, played at a blistering tempo and sweeping across range of the guitar with beautiful ascending arpeggios.

Bluegrass banjo wiz Alan Munde also recorded on this album and first met Robert

Robert Bowlin, not yet 3 years old, plays his first instrument for his grandmother



Robert Bowlin was the 1979 National Fingerpicking Champion

during the project. Impressed with his playing, Munde soon found out about Robert's extensive musical background. Interested in Robert's unique perspective, Munde asked, "With all your studies and classical music background, what one musical thing is most attractive to you?" Without hesitation, Robert replied that he really liked a specific three-note "da-da-dah" G lick that Earl Scruggs played on the banjo.

During this period Robert played guitar, fiddle, mandolin and piano on numerous Ridge Runner recordings including the author's *Otter Nonsense* and two albums for Dan Huckabee's Workshop Records. *Twin Guitar Workshop* and *Twin Mandolin Workshop* were comprised of Robert's original two part harmony arrangements of traditional bluegrass tunes.

After moving to Nashville, news of Robert's impressive skills spread quickly. He eventually replaced Russ Barenberg as guitarist for Maura O'Connell. He also recorded and toured with Kathy Mattea from 1987 through 1989. He even worked on the road with country singer Tom T. Hall, both as a fiddler and occasionally on the trumpet! He has played fiddle with Faron Young and also played on the movie soundtrack *The Newton Boys*.

Robert earned a footnote in bluegrass music history as the "last Bluegrass Boy Fiddler." Robert was with Monroe from 1993 through 1996. Bill Monroe died while Robert was a member of the band. Most recently, Robert performs regularly with Richard Greene's "Grass is Greener." He got this gig when Nashville mandolinist Butch Baldassari recommended Robert for the job after David Grier left the band.

Early in his career, Robert found the guitarist's holy grail. His1935 Martin D-28 was a well balanced example with all the great features of tone and volume associated with this classic guitar. This superb instrument was stolen in Arlington, Texas in 1979. Robert continues to look for it and he is sure it will turn up someday. It is serial #60911.

Today, Robert plays a 1935 Martin D-18 as his main guitar. Recording engineers really seem to like this guitar, so Robert is happy. "When people tell me they like the sound of an instrument, I listen." He also plays an early 1953 National archtop which he uses primarily for jazz settings, but also uses occasionally in country and bluegrass settings as well. Robert generally uses D'Addario Phosphor Bronze strings although he has been trying out D'Aquisto Heavy Gauge Jazz (.13-.56) which Tony Rice told him about.

In the studio, Robert pays attention to how he is miked. His favorite combination is a Neumann U 47 or U 67 microphone placed near the top edge of the soundhole about eight inches away and a KM 84 about a foot away between the bridge and the end pin. This stereo set up produces a very warm, true recording of the guitar.

Over the years, while searching for quality musical instruments, Robert has learned a lot about vintage instruments, especially violins. He also learned to repair and restore violins and has operated his own violin shop in Nashville.

While the word "unique" is overused to describe artists, Robert's guitar style is deserving of the term. He has many influences, but they show up in his music only as colors or suggestions. Rather than hearing specific licks from master players, one hears the precision of Doc Watson, the big tone of Tony Rice, or the rhythmic playfulness of Clarence White. Robert's lyrical melodic approach is a refreshing musical alternative to the lick-driven soloing often heard in bluegrass circles. His impressive knowledge of the whole instrument allows him to move freely to all positions on the neck.

Although Robert has had classical training on both the guitar and piano, he says that most everything he has learned has been by ear, either from recordings or simply figuring out a song by himself after he obtained a feel for the melody. When he is performing he has never directly copied the solos that he has learned from records, but says that he did learn other player's solos note-for-note in order to capture the essence of what they were doing. He says, "A phrase is not a phrase without all of its internal components." Early in his career Robert would borrow licks from Clarence White or Doc Watson and they would show up "here and there" in his playing. But he says, "I also had my own bag of licks and I think that they all just gradually got infused." When teaching, Robert recommends that students learn by ear and encourages them to do so.

Robert's guitar style has developed under a variety of influences. He says that his basic sense of timing and rhythm came from the piano. Subsequent exposure to Earl Scrugg's banjo and Clarence White's guitar work added some creativity to his rhythm and timing, as well as smoothness to his playing. He points to Doc Watson's clean and driving style as being influential and says, "I think Tony Rice has done the most to broaden the creative concept of flattop guitar playing in terms of solid tone and overall sound." Violin playing has also had an influence on Robert's guitar style and he points to Kenny Baker's ability to get a "big driving sound with economy and taste."

When asked about his lyrical and melodic approach to guitar playing Robert said, "When I was really practicing the violin a lot, I would listen to myself back on

Robert Bowlin picking with John Hartford in 1997

tape and try to improve and play more lyrically—which means that I tried to have an idea in my head and then play it on the violin to where it sounded lyrical. I think that started to influence my guitar playing somewhat. Because the violin is a 'singing' instrument, and sticking to the melody is part of fiddle playing because of its heritage, working with the violin gave me more of an awareness of melody. I think that also gave me a melodic awareness on the guitar."

He continues, "When I was eight or ten I was around somebody who told me how important taste was. They would say, 'Now that was a tasty lick,' or 'He really had a tasteful approach to that.' That really made an impression on me and so I've tried to do it that way, or at least I was aware of such a thing and that it was important. I knew that there was something more to it than just sitting down and playing endless streams of notes." Robert says that his work with the various instruments and musical styles that he plays has not specifically influenced his guitar playing in the sense of copying licks or phrases, but he says that the general musical knowledge has carried over.

Today, Robert's main creative instrument is the guitar. When improvising, arranging his solos, or writing original compositions, he says that he allows a "stream of consciousness" to flow without trying to think about anything too specific. He says at most he will think about the song's structure in terms of A and B parts and he thinks about the mood of the song. He says, "I don't think about chords, or notes, or keys, or anything. It always messes me up when I try to think."

Although he has a very broad background in music and a deep theoretical knowledge, Robert says that he does not draw specifically on that background or theory when he is playing. He says, "All of the theory did not fly out of my head. I believe it goes into my creative process, but I don't have to think about it. When you get up on stage, everything that you have done you bring with you some how. "

When performing, Robert says he likes to communicate with the audience and "tell a story." He says, "Even when you are playing classical music, which is rigid in the compositional sense because it is written down, it is left up to the player to interpret the music and make it come to life. That is the improvisational part of classical music. So whether you are improvising on the spot or have something worked out before hand, it is still left up to the player to tell the story. When I am playing I try to feel the music the best I can. I feel the audience, feel the moment, and that will bring out the story."

Robert has spent most of his musical life as a sideman. His contributions are always designed to help the music and to make the other musicians sound good. The tune presented on the pages which follow is an example of his own music, which up until now has only been known to a small audience. In conjunction with this article, Robert is finally recording a solo guitar project, which will announce to the flatpicking world what a small group has known for a long time—this guy is one of the greats!

Transcription Notes

Due to space considerations, only the three main themes appear here. Allow all open strings to ring as long as possible. The chord names given above the staff are for analysis only. Try a first finger barre over strings 3, 2, and 1 from the end of measure 5 into measure 6.

For more information about Robert Bowlin, visit his website: www.musicnearyou.com/rbowlin.htm

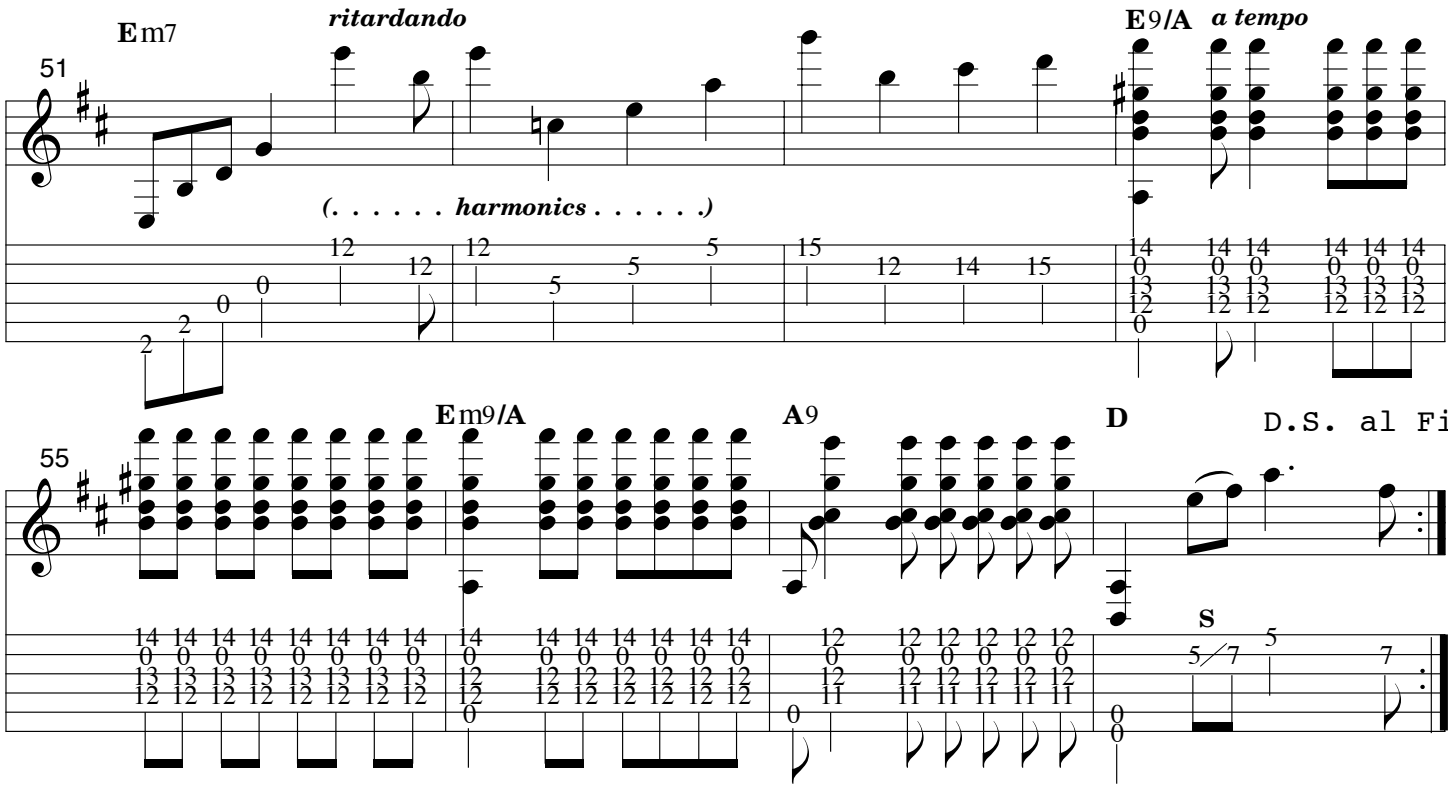
Robert Bowlin was Bill Monroe's last fiddle player. He was with Monroe from 1993-96

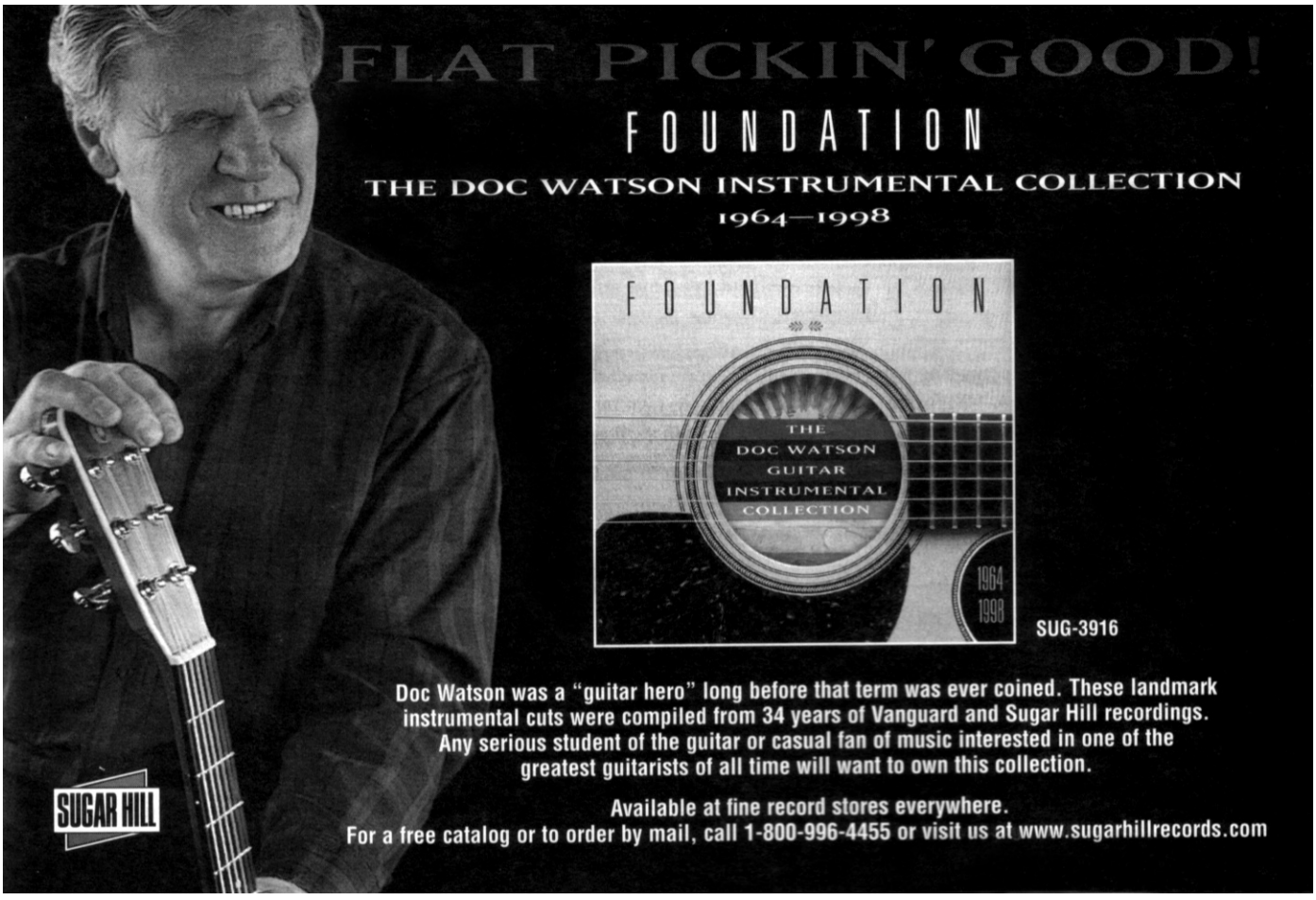
Eleven Point Sunset

Arranged by Robert Bowlin
Transcribed by Joe Carr

Eleven Point Sunset (con't)

Eleven Point Sunset (con't)

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Miller's Reel

by Craig Vance

Miller's Reel

Here is a reel that works very well on the guitar, though it is mostly heard on the fiddle. Like most reels, it is of Scotch/Irish origin. This tune leaves very little space for the player to breathe or rest. It has a fairly consistent and perpetual flow. There is a little room to rest the fingers on the 2nd half of the tune, but for the most part it flies right on through.

On the 2nd section of the tune, you will find that it is helpful to use the "F" chord form on both the G and A. The fingering in the first three measures will be easier for you.

This particular version is close to the Norman Blake version that you can find on the *Old and New* CD (Flying Fish FF 70004).

It can also be found on John Hartford's recording *Old Sport*, and on Byron Berline's recording *Dad's Favorites* (Rounder CD-0100). It is also on Steve Kaufman's *Four Hour Bluegrass Workout*, which is available through Homespun Tapes.

Craig Vance is currently the lead guitarist for The McKrells, an upstate New York based band which features a unique musical blend of Celtic, American folk, bluegrass, and country. Craig began his career over 20 years ago as a solo act playing warm-up sets for such noteworthy performers as Doc and Merle Watson, the Country Gentleman, and Berline, Crary, and Hickman. He has also performed on stage with Norman Blake.

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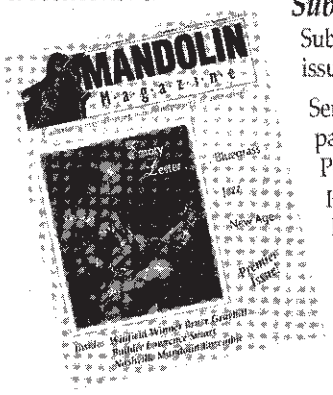

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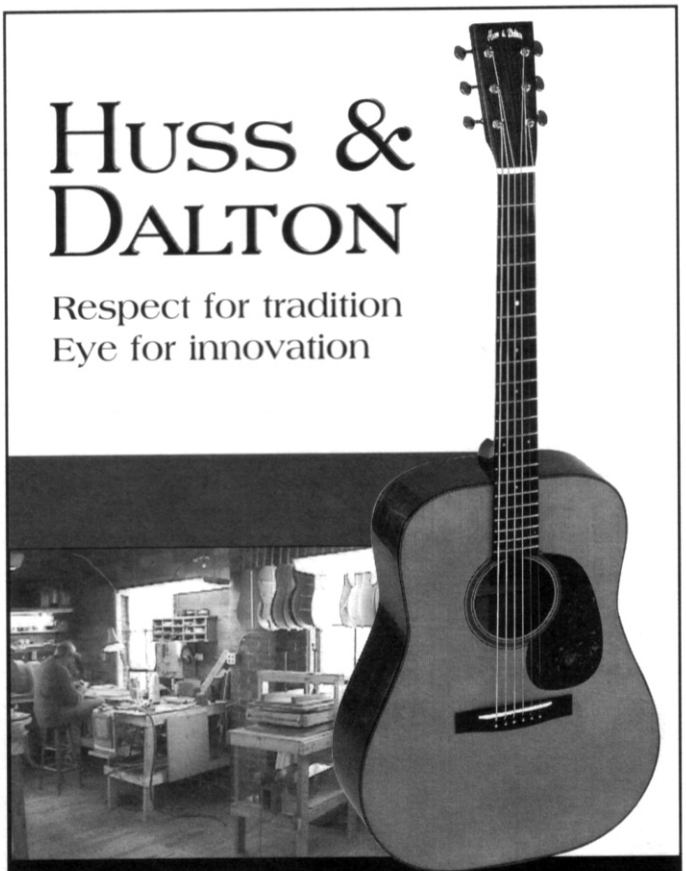

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Miller's Reel

Arranged by Craig Vance

On our *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* Audio companion CD to this issue you can hear all of the songs which have been tabbed out in this issue plus interviews with our feature artist!
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Beginner's Page

by Dan Huckabee

Do you have a weak pinky finger?
Don't feel alone!

Ah, the baby finger. Mine is so uncoordinated, so wimpy, and so unruly! What can I do about? Well, first don't avoid using it. That's what most people do, and you can guess that they regret it later down the line. Sure you can get away with substituting its big strong brother, the ring finger (I call it the 3rd finger) for a while, but in the back of your mind, you know you're cheating. You know that all your other fingers are getting lots of practice and are growing in strength and agility every day, while atrophy is setting into the poor old sedentary baby finger.

Think of your 4 fingers as a 4-man basketball team. Can you really afford to have 3 good players and one lousy player? I know… "Django Reinhardt only had 2 fingers." All I can say is, "Django had 4 fingers before the accident and when he had 'em, he used 'em."

You might find it comforting to know that everyone has trouble with the pinky. It's not just you. As a matter of fact, the anatomy of the hand is a bit of a bad design where the pinky is concerned. I don't know much about anatomy, but the muscular design of the pinky is somewhat less sophisticated than the other 3 fingers. And in all of us, it is weaker and less independent. In fact it tends to react to whatever the ring finger does. Legend has it that Mozart intentionally broke both of his pinkies in the middle of the first joint, hoping to increase length and agility. Since that's a little drastic for you, I hope it serves as a wake-up call that your pinky really needs more work than the other three, and on top of that, usually gets less in a normal guitar session.

OK, I'll be the first to admit that I hate doing sit-ups. I do want to give you something that you will actually be willing to practice on a regular basis. So if I can't scare you into giving your pinky some extra attention, I'll give you an exercise that's really easy and actually pretty fun. Once you've learned it, use it for your warm-up every time you open your case, and this will get you into the habit of doing it on a regular basis. It is a very clever design and I didn't invent it. However, I did adapt it from a famous old violin exercise that is quite common.

You don't need tab because it's simply: 0-2-4-3-2-4-1-4 over and over, played on any string. It is easiest on the first string, and you can eventually work your way up to playing it on the 6th string, which is the hardest because it's the longest stretch to reach.

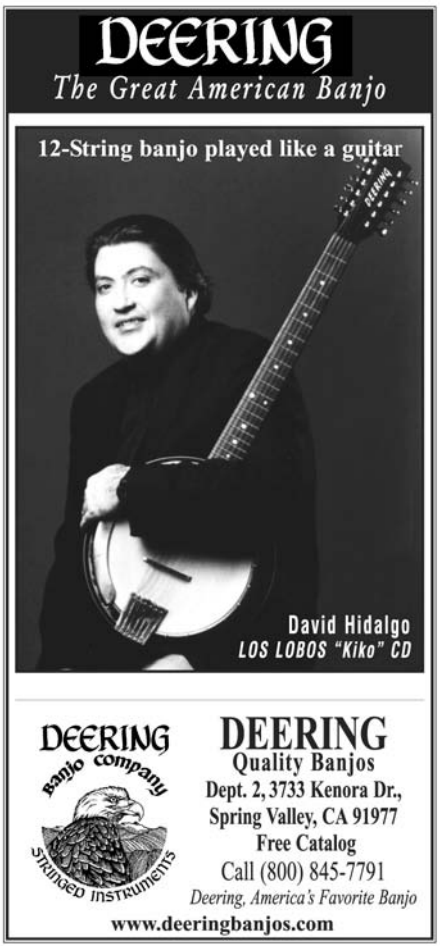
To explain it further: you would play open, then 2nd finger at the 2nd fret, then 4th finger at the 4th fret and so on. The idea is to repeat it as many times as your fingers can stand. Ideally, you should also alternate your pick direction (down, up, down, up, down, up down, up repeat) and gradually increase your speed as you get better.

As you advance you can change the pattern to: 3-4-3-4-3-4-3-4-2-4-2-4-2-4-2-4-1-4-1-4-1-4-1-4-1-4, followed by the first exercise 0-2-4-3-2-4-1-4. Then, as you get good at that, you could start reaching out an extra fret with the pinky, playing the other note where you had been, but playing the pinky note on the 5th fret. Don't try the more advanced exercises for a few months or until you feel like you are ready.

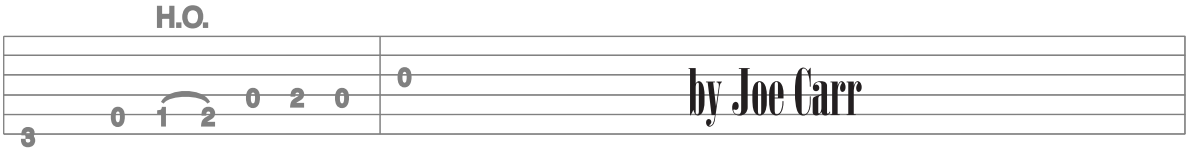
At this point I would like to bring up the concept of what I call "planting." This is referring to leaving the 2nd finger down when playing the 4th (for example). In other words, leave fingers down (after they have been used) unless they are obstructing the next note to be played. Getting into this habit trains your fingers to stay closer to the fingerboard, and will help you get faster and better, simply because they won't have as far to travel when they are needed.

You'll be able to see right away that these exercises address strength, stamina, and flexibility. Hopefully, if you practice them enough, you will become as comfortable using your pinky as you are with your other fingers.

This exercise is a part of our video called *Bluegrass Guitar the Right Way is the Easy Way*. If you would like more information on it and our newer flatpicking lessons, just give us a call toll free at 800-543-6125 or check out our web site at: www.musicians-workshop.com. See ya next issue.



Flatpick Rhythm Guitar



by Joe Carr

G Lick Displacement

It happens to all of us. We try to put that new cool bass run into a song, but we start too early or late and it comes out wrong. But wait a minute - is it wrong or just not what we expected to hear?

Many of our favorite bluegrass licks are built from the scale of the 1 chord (let's use G for example) . Since all the G scale notes work against a G chord, we can start the lick on any beat we want and it will probably work out ok! What a relief!

It doesn't matter if you goof up, because you can't goof up.

This is also a great way to dress up your tired old licks. By starting the phrase on a different beat, the sound is totally changed. OK, maybe it won't sound great every time. but it is worth a try.

If you have trouble counting musical time, this column can help. In all the examples below, there are 4 beats. Quarter notes get 1 beat and eighth notes get 1/2 beat. To count eighth notes in a measure of 4/4, count (out loud), "one and two and three and four and." Remember to pick down on the numbers (1,2,3,4) and up on the "ands."

Lick 1 begins on beat one. After the 6 notes of the lick, strum down-up on the "four and" to complete the measure.

Lick 2 begins on "and" after 1. Say "one" and begin picking with an upstroke on "and." The D note ("and" after 4) was added to fill out the measure.

Lick 3 begins on beat 2, the downbeat. The extra G note was added at the first of the measure.

Lick 4 begins on "and" after 2. Count "1 and 2" and begin with an upstroke. The last note of the lick was changed to a quarter note.

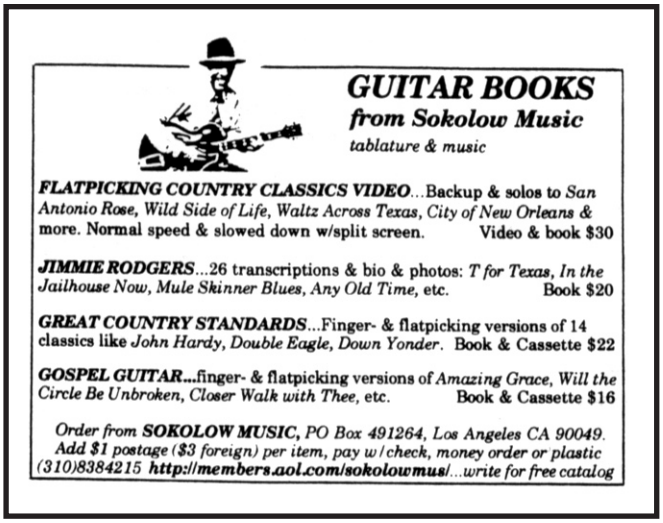
Lick 5 begins on 3. The first measure count "1, 2, 3 and 4 and." The second measure counts "1, and 2, and, 3, 4." This one is harder to count.

Lick 6 begins on "and" after 3.

Lick 7 begins on 4.

Lick 8 begins on "and" after 4.

Practice each lick slowly until you get the feel. I especially recommend the CD so you can hear each example played. Good luck with this challenging project!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G-Lick Displacement Exercises

Flatpick Profile:
Cecil Tinnon

by Dan Miller

Cecil Tinnon's great-uncle, Ben Tinnon, played the fiddle and taught music to cotton farmers in central Illinois using a method he called "hillbilly music theory." One of Ben's students was Cecil's father, Paul (also a fiddle player) who, in turn, passed the knowledge along to Cecil on the guitar. What Cecil's dad knew about his Uncle Ben was that he was a cantankerous man who had devised a simple, effective method of teaching music to uneducated farm workers; he was a strict taskmaster when it came to teaching music; and every once in a while Ben would receive a mysterious check in the mail. When the checks showed up, Cecil's dad, a young boy at the time, speculated that the old man was a gambler. Ben passed away before Cecil was born

Fast forward to earlier this year. Cecil was playing a radio show with his friends Gary and Roberta Gordon. After the show someone called the station and asked to speak to Cecil. The caller, who had heard Cecil's name announced on the radio, asked if Cecil might be related to a Ben Tinnon who played music. The caller explained that he was writing an article for *Country Magazine* about Ben and was having a hard time tracking down information. Cecil was a little confused, "An article about Uncle Ben for *Country Magazine*?" At first Cecil thought the caller might have been asking about his dad's brother, also named Ben, who was a guitar player. After getting a little bit more information, Cecil determined that the caller was interested in his great uncle. He also learned from the caller that not only had his great uncle graduated from Julliard, but had made a number of 78 recordings for RCA. The checks that appeared in Ben's mailbox over the years were royalty payments from the record company.

Although it was a little surprising for Cecil to find out that his great-uncle was a Julliard graduate and well-known recording artist in his day, it also made sense. Cecil has come to appreciate, through what his father has taught him, how expert a music teacher his great uncle was.

Cecil's first musical instrument was a snare drum. By the time he was 7 or 8 he was playing with his father and uncle in a group called the Tinnon Trio, with Cecil's father on fiddle and his uncle on guitar. Cecil said, "I played the snare with a stick and a brush. We played gospel music in church. I first learned about timing and rhythm by playing the snare drum."

When Cecil was 9 or 10 he expressed an interested in learning how to play the guitar. He began by learning how to back up his father's fiddle playing. After learning basic chords, Cecil's father taught him how to hear the changes. From the beginning, instead of telling Cecil where the chord changes were going to occur, he would make Cecil listen for them. If his father was playing and Cecil failed to make a chord change, he would stop and say, "Did you hear how the music changed there?" Through trial and error, and thanks to his first lesson in "hillbilly theory," Cecil eventually developed an ear for knowing when the changes were occurring and where they were going.

The first lesson in "hillbilly theory" on guitar consisted of knowing what note each string was tuned to; how to move up each string and figure out what the notes at each fret where (remembering that there is no B# or E# notes); and learning about a I-IV-V progression by knowing the "L" pattern. The "L" pattern starts on the high E string of the guitar and moves from there straight across (on the same fret) to the A string, and then down the A string two frets, thus forming an upside down "L-shape." The way it works is that if you want to play in the key of G, you find the G note on the high E string (3rd fret). This is your I. You then go across the strings, on the same fret, and find what note is at that fret on the A string (3rd fret - C note). This is your IV. You then move down along the A string two frets (5th fret - D note). This is your V.

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This method works for whatever key you want to play in. (Try it!)

After learning how to back up his father's fiddle playing on guitar, Cecil began playing with his father in Cliff Patterson's band at the Troy Opry (later renamed the Troy Music Barn) in Troy, Illinois. He was 14 or 15 when he started with the band and played this gig every Friday night for nearly ten years. The band played the country music of Hank Williams, Merle Haggard, and Johnny Cash as well as pop swing tunes such as "Sweet Georgia Brown," and "Five Foot Two Eyes of Blue." Cecil was still playing mostly rhythm guitar when he started with the band, but did begin learning some of the lead riffs to the country tunes.

When Cecil was 16 or 17 he got his first real exposure to bluegrass guitar picking when the Harman Trio came to play at the Troy Opry. A young Bull Harman was playing lead guitar breaks on fiddle tunes and Cecil's dad was impressed. Cecil said, "I remember Dad just bragged on him saying that he had 'never heard a kid pick like that.' I didn't know it at the time, but he was setting the fire in me."

With his dad's help and coaching Cecil began to learn how to play fiddle tunes. Cecil says, "Dad started out by teaching me Irish reels, jigs, and hornpipes. He would play the tune to give me an idea of the melody and then I would try to find it on the guitar." Cecil continues, "I didn't think that the music he was teaching me had absolutely anything to do with the country music I was playing at the time, or the bluegrass the Bull had played. I wanted to learn songs like 'Black Mountain Rag,' but here I was learning this Irish music. I come to find out later that he was using those tunes to develop my dexterity, picking patterns, and mental game plan. When I finally went to learn songs like 'Old Joe Clark,' it was very easy. I had my patterns figured out and had a plan."

When Cecil was 19 or 20 he began playing electric guitar in country bars, but that only lasted 3 or 4 years. He said, "I could see myself getting tied to the bad element and so I quit that." When he was in his mid-twenties he began attending bluegrass festivals and got hooked on bluegrass in a big way. He said, "It wasn't just the music. It was the people. It was like having a family reunion at every festival. That hook me on bluegrass. The fellowship you have with bluegrass people is second to none." The depth of that "bluegrass fellowship" was recently revealed to Cecil last year when he had to undergo back surgery one day before his wife went into the hospital to deliver their baby (seven weeks early). The local bluegrass organizations put on a benefit to help Cecil's family during the recovery period. Cecil says, "That really rejuvenated my love for bluegrass people."

Over the past 15 years Cecil has played in a number of different bands. Most recently he played mandolin on Bull Harman's *Bull-Eye* CD and is touring with Bull's band. He is also playing some dates with his friends Gary and Roberta Gordon. Of his experience playing with the Gordons, Cecil says, "I have learned a whole lot about how to execute music from playing with Gary and Roberta. They have one rule, which is, 'For the sake of the tune.' By following that rule, I have learned how to execute solos with feeling and I have learned that simplicity is better."

Although Cecil does not consider himself to be a contest player, he did enter and win the Missouri state flatpicking championship in 1988, which gave him an automatic entry

into the national championships in Winfield, Kansas. Cecil went to Winfield that year to compete, but has not entered a guitar contest since. One of the highlights of his Winfield trip was getting the opportunity to meet Doc Watson. Cecil said, "I went up to Doc and asked him what the secret to crosspicking was. He said, 'Get a big glass of tea, sit in the shade, and practice.' That couldn't have been better advice."

When asked about his playing style, Cecil says that he tends to play up the neck out of closed positions more than most flatpickers due to part of the "hill-billy theory" he learned at a young age. He explains that the way he learned to play a I-V-IV progression and move it around in any key was to first make the "E shape" chord at the first position of the "L" (explained earlier in this article) to find your I chord. In other words, if you want to play in the key of G, you find your G note on the high E string and play the "E-shape" chord at that fret (bar chord G at the third fret). To find your IV chord, you keep the bar chord at the same fret, but play the "A-shape" chord (this gives you your C chord). To find your V chord, you simply move the A-shape bar chord up the neck two frets (this gives you your D chord). Using this pattern, Cecil explains, it is easy to take a break in the key of G and transpose it to another key.

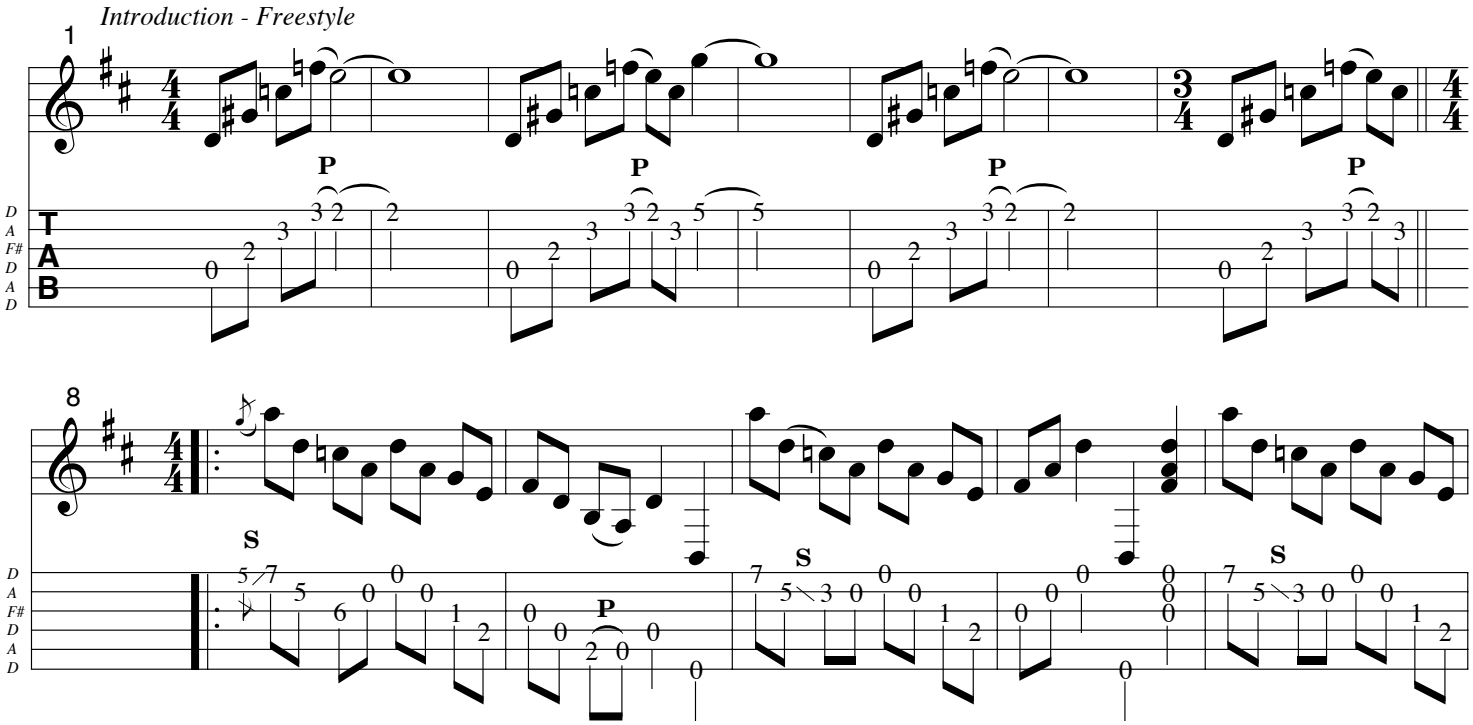
"I went up to Doc and asked him what the secret to crosspicking was. He said, 'Get a big glass of tea, sit in the shade, and practice.' That couldn't have been better advice."

The tune that Cecil has provided us for this issue, (which is transcribed on the following page and appears on the *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* Audio CD companion for this issue) is an original tune he calls "Staghorn Grip." He learned the tuning (D A D F# A D) from a hammer dulcimer player. One day he was fooling around with the tuning while visiting a friend, Tim Gray. Cecil explains that Tim is a woodsman and a friend of his had made him some knives using staghorns for the knife grip. The staghorn knife grips proved to be the inspiration for the song and its title.

Staghorn Grip

Written by Cecil Tinnon

Tuning DADF#AD



Staghorn Grip (con't)

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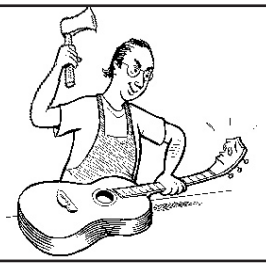


by Frank Ford

Making a New Saddle

Last time we talked about lowering the action at the saddle. Raising the action at the saddle is really just the reverse procedure, but it requires a bit more judgment and effort. If the saddle only needs to be a little bit higher, it may be reasonable to lay a small shim underneath to raise it.

Even though a shim is not integral with the saddle or even made of the same material, it is unlikely to have an adverse effect on tone. (In my opinion, of course.) If you look at the way the strings bear on the saddle you'll notice that there's a lot of forward thrust. So, the saddle makes strong positive contact with the sides of the slot in which it rests.

Shims frequently have an adverse effect on structural integrity, however. A higher saddle will obviously have a greater "forward" load on it as a result of string tension. Thick shims underneath will reduce the saddle slot's effective depth, and its ability to hold the saddle upright.

Most of the time, I prefer to raise the saddle by replacing it. That way, I'm assured of its strength. In this little article, I'll describe a method for making a new saddle with no specialized tools, as a reminder that it's a possible do-it-yourself job for flatpickers.

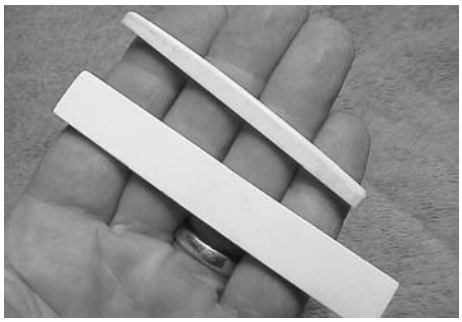
Most modern guitars have their saddles held captive in a slot. The saddle can be removed by simply lifting it out, and unless there's a pickup element underneath, the saddle can be replaced by simply sticking a new one in after forming it to fit neatly.

Old Martins, and some vintage style reissues, often have their saddles glued in place in a slot that cuts through at both ends. These are not easy to replace, and are best left to an experienced luthier.

Here's the subject:

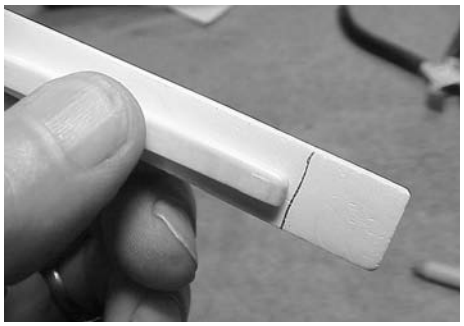
This guitar's action is quite a bit too low with the existing saddle, so I'll make a new one to raise the action.

Here's the saddle removed from the bridge, along with a new bone "blank" which is considerably oversize in all three dimensions:



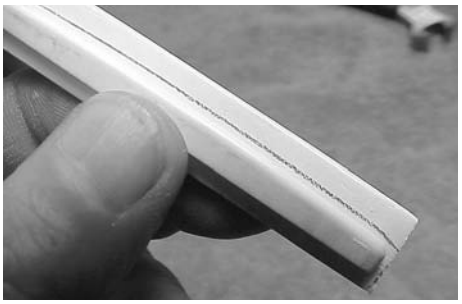
Bone is the most universally agreed upon natural material, being hard, dense, and economical.

First, I'll mark the blank to cut off excess length, leaving it just a bit longer than my original:



A plain old hacksaw does a fine job cutting bone:

Same thing for the height. I'll mark the saddle blank to cut off excess, leaving more height than I'll need:



The idea is to reduce the effort in thinning the blank to fit the saddle slot. The blank isn't really straight and flat, so I'll rub it on a piece of 150 grit sandpaper I have clipped to an old marble cutting board:

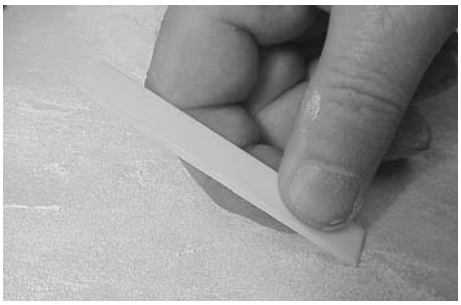
A flat counter top works just as well as a sanding surface. In fact, it's amazing how fast and easy it is to shape bone by rubbing it on sandpaper. Notice in the photo above, I'm holding the blank with as many fingers as possible. The idea is to keep the pressure distributed evenly to avoid bending or distorting the saddle as I sand.

Once I have the blank flattened, I start trial fitting it into the saddle slot. Flipping the saddle over to sand the opposite side, retrying the fit over and over, I manage to get the saddle to fit neatly into the slot.

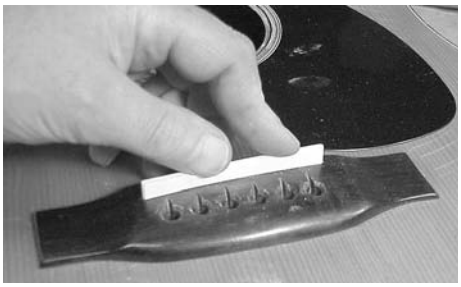
It's important for me to try both ends of the saddle into the slot, and to try the ends of the blank into both ends of the saddle slot. It is always possible for the saddle slot to be a bit uneven, and given the choice, I'd like my saddle to fit tightly all along its length:

Once I get the blank to fit into the slot, I'll start to shape it. The ends of the slot are usually rounded because the slot was made by a rotary cutter. Now, it seems logical that I'd want to make the ends fit perfectly, but it turns out not to be all that necessary. If my saddle has nice approximate rounded ends and is the right length, it will fit so neatly into the slot that any tiny gaps at the ends will disappear.

By "wiping" the saddle back and forth against the flat sanding surface, I can form those rounded ends:



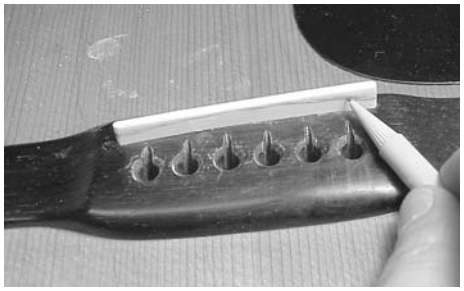
After a few tries, I get the length just about right, and the saddle will press down into the slot:



Ideally, it fits tight enough that I need a pair of pliers to lift it out, but just loose enough that I can push it down by hand. I wouldn't drive it in with a hammer for fear of splitting the bridge! (If I get the blank too thin by accident, I'll start over.)

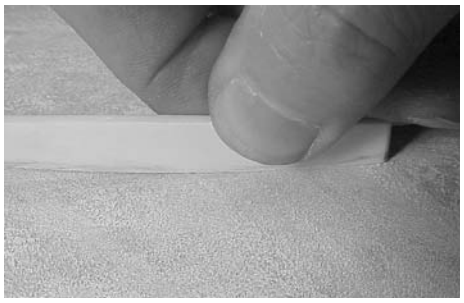
Now that it fits into the slot, I'll mark the treble end of the bottom, so I won't get the ends reversed as I proceed with the rest of the job:

With the saddle in position, I'll mark the approximate height I'd like:

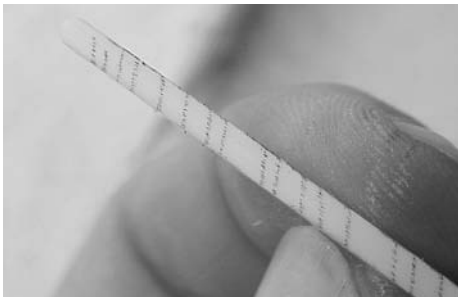


I could measure it. for example, if the action measured 1/32" too low at the 12th frets, I'd want my new saddle to be 1/16" higher than the original. I could hold the old and new saddles up together, and simply trace the curve of the top. Here, I'm marking it roughly, because this guitar has just had its neck reset, and the saddle needs to go up quite a bit. I'll make a high one, and then lower it to get the action I want.

I simply scrub the saddle lengthwise on the flat sandpaper until I hit my pencil line:



The top of the saddle needs to be rounded where the strings contact it, so I'll strike some "witness marks" with a pencil, so I can judge my progress in shaping it:

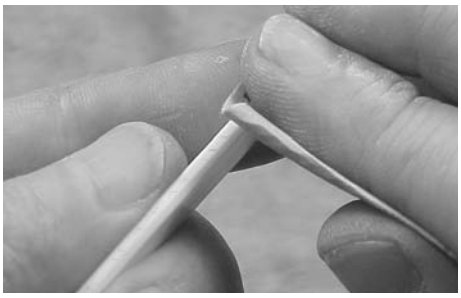


Here's the best little trick. I hold the saddle at about a 45 degree angle as I sand two little facets along the top edge:

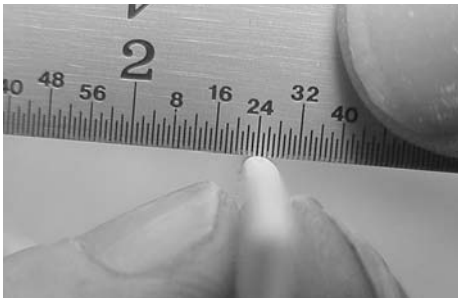
Here it is:

Two 45 degree facets, with an equal width of flat space still remaining along the center of the top edge.

Simply sanding with some flexible 220 grit sandpaper, backed only with my fingers, gives me a nice rounded top:



I can judge the top of the saddle most easily if I hold it up to the bottom edge of a thin steel rule:



The shadow underneath reveals the top contour of the saddle very nicely.

Well, my new saddle is done. If I want a really sharp appearance, I could buff it to a high shine, although the 220 grit sandpaper gives a nice semigloss hand rubbed look.

With my new saddle in place it's easy for me to measure the action in the usual way at the 12th fret, to judge how much I need to remove from the bottom of the saddle to get the action I want. I can also reshape the top to lower some strings selectively:

In other words, from here, its all just a setup!

Frank Ford has been a full time professional luthier ever since he and his partner, Richard Johnston, founded Gryphon Stringed Instruments in 1969. Frank has written repair articles for a number of guitar and luthier publications, and currently serves on the board of directors of the Association of Stringed Instrument Artisans. He is a regular guest instructor at the Roberto-Venn School of Luthiery in Phoenix, and at the American School of Lutherie in Healdsburg, California. Frank created and maintains FRET.COM (www.frets.com), the largest acoustic instrument maintenance and repair reference site on the Internet.

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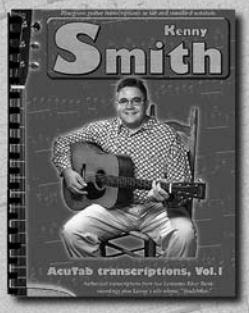

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Flatpicking & Folk/Acoustic Rock

by John Tindel

Over the Hills and Far Away

Greetings, music lovers! Welcome to the column with that notorious "R" word in the heading. Thankfully, our intrepid editor Dan saw fit to pair it up with the word "acoustic," which does serve to rein me in a little bit. But given that the word is, in fact, there, I suppose that it was inevitable that this would happen sooner or later. Yes, it's a Led Zeppelin song in the pages of *Flatpick Guitar Magazine*! Cover your ears! Head for the hills and bolt for the exits! But wait ... come back! It's acoustic, I swear! You'll like it, it's fun, you'll see.

With the exception of the intro to "Stairway to Heaven," which has become a cliched parody of itself, Led Zeppelin has lots of wonderful acoustic passages interspersed among their more typically loud, electric guitar based songs. One of my favorites of these is the beginning section of this column's featured tune, "Over the Hills and Far Away." I really like playing this because it has such an interesting timing feel and is such a fun way to get back and forth between G and D. You hear a lot of people bluff their way through this one, but not many get it right. So seize the opportunity to learn this passage and join the ranks of those who know how it's supposed to go. At least until you get to the part that gets really loud and electric, that is!

Even though the timing seems tricky, keep in mind that it's just good ol' 4/4. Jimmy Page was just having some fun with syncopation. Don't let the first five notes fool you, the downbeat, or the "1" begins on that first G chord.

This is a great song for practicing those hammer-ons and pull-offs and for honing your ability to play in unusual timing feels. Oh, and don't forget to perfect your Robert Plant vocal stylings. Careful with this last: you may stain something or injure yourself, or more importantly, someone around you.

So, have some fun with this one, all you flatpicking rockers, and be sure and tune in next issue when we will be exploring the sensitive, acoustic side of the Sex Pistols, Back Sabbath and, my favorite, Iron Maiden.

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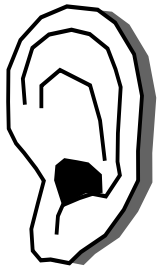

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Over the Hills and Far Away

Arranged by John Tindel

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Hoffman Guitars

by
Adam Granger

photo by Nick Felice

The unassuming building on Franklin Avenue on Minneapolis' West Bank used to house a coffee company, but for the last twenty-six years, it's been home to Hoffman Guitars, one of the oldest independent guitar shops in the country.

The Hoffman Guitar story began thirty years ago, when Charlie Hoffman was a twenty-seven-year-old PhD candidate in American constitutional history at the University of Minnesota. Looking for a therapeutic release from the rigors of academic work, and having always loved woodworking (he caught the bug from his father), the jump to guitar construction and repair was a short and logical one. Charlie read Irving Sloan's book on classical guitar construction, bought some wood, and built his first guitar in 1970 in his apartment.

In 1971, he teamed up with fellow luthier Rod Bellville to open Bellville & Hoffman guitars. "I don't remember the thought process, if any, which led to our opening the shop," Charlie says. "We found some old display cases, built some benches, bought an old cash register and we opened up, originally just as a repair shop. I didn't imagine at the time that I was going to build guitars. It just sort of grew." Bellville & Hoffman moved to its present location in 1975, and Hoffman bought out Bellville in 1977 (Rod Bellville now lives in Wisconsin, where he farms and breeds golden retrievers).

In 1983, with thirteen years of guitar making under his belt, and with the fiscal reality of two college-bound children weighing on him, Charlie entered law school. His guitar-making continued through this period, but on a scaled-down level. Nevertheless, Hoffman says, "It never occurred to me that I wouldn't keep the shop open. I had some employees whom I liked, and I didn't want to take their jobs away from them. Also, it was an identity thing: this is my business, and people know Hoffman Guitars."

One of the most attractive aspects of Charlie's philosophy as a luthier is his complete flexibility. He'll use any woods the customer wants—rosewood, mahogany, walnut or koa—and he'll build darned near any type of instrument they want: he's currently working on, among other things, a parlor guitar, some 12-fret-neck concert-sized guitars, a few slope-shouldered D-shaped 24 3/4-inch-scale guitars and two stunning harp guitars (in addition to, of course, standard dreadnaught guitars).

When it comes to describing the sounds of his guitars, Hoffman expresses some frustration: "One of the things that I've come to believe is that we are basically incapable of using words to describe the sound of guitars. I find it totally inadequate. People will call up and say, 'What do your guitars sound like?' I'll run off all these words, and I don't know if they mean the same thing to the person I'm talking to as they do to me. I don't know of any way around that. I love to have people who are going to order a guitar come in and play some of my guitars, because then they know what Hoffman guitars sound like." When pressed, Charlie says he likes guitars with a balanced sound and clear definition. When playing a chord anywhere on the neck, he feels one should hear each note, not just the chord.

About guitar sound in general, Hoffman says, "I believe that all of us have been trained, more or less since birth, that the sound of a good steel-string flat top acoustic guitar is the sound of a Martin X-braced guitar. I use an X-brace pattern that's different from Martins in relatively subtle ways. I make a traditional guitar that is not a copy of anybody's guitar."

One distinctive feature of Hoffman guitars is their five-piece laminated neck: mahogany-maple-rosewood-maple-mahogany. This makes, says Hoffman, a very strong neck. Although, as mentioned, Charlie will build pretty much what the customer wants, he favors traditional elements: herringbone, tortoiseshell binding and dreadnaught size and shape are common features of Hoffman guitars.

Charlie Hoffman is currently working on guitar number 378. With thirty years of building behind him, he is one of the most venerable—and durable—independent luthiers in the world. There is a year-and-a-half wait for a Hoffman guitar. His construction pace—currently eight to ten guitars a year—is slowed, understandably, by his law career, but Charlie has a clear view of the future: "I will eventually retire from practicing law and do this full-time until the day I die."

Note: Hoffman Guitars does warranty work for virtually every guitar maker and can handle repairs and rebuilds of any type. They have a great website: www.hoffmanguitars.com.

AN ASPIRING PICKER GOES TO CAMP
A Review of Steve Kaufman's Flatpicking Camp 2000

By Mike Armistead

For years I have been an average guitar player wondering how to take my playing to the next level. Likewise for years I have been pondering the lineup that Steve Kaufman annually puts together for his Flatpicking Camp at Maryville College near Knoxville, Tennessee. Each year the list of teachers sounded like my dream. This year's list was also stellar: John Carlini, Beppe Gambetta, John Moore, Bryan Sutton, Stephen Bennett, Rolly Brown, Brad Davis, and other great guitarists like Steve, all topped off with a concert by Doc Watson.

Would guitar camp be a positive experience? Would it be worth $650.00, plus more for tapes and travel? Should I give up a week of vacation that could be spent with my wife and kids? These were my fears as I contemplated guitar camp for 2000.

This year I took the plunge, and it was an experience that far exceeded my expectations.

The process starts long before summer when ads appear in *Flatpicking Guitar* and other musical magazines, and flyers come in the mail. These provoke phone inquiries to the Steve's Flatpicking Hotline, and a lot of questions are patiently answered, undoubtedly not for the first time. Often they are answered by Steve himself. A deposit reserves a spot in the camp, and a confirmation soon follows in the mail.

Maryville College is a small Presbyterian school nestled in the foothills between Knoxville, Tennessee, and the Great Smoky Mountains. It is a wonderful setting for this experience, with good food, facilities, and great opportunities for exploring in the area. Check-in at the dorms runs all afternoon on Fathers' Day, and thanks to some help from the students, even into the evening. Steve and his staff have made this process as simple as possible. Impromptu jam sessions spring up quickly as campers get their fingers loosened for a week of fun and not a whole lot of sleep.

Camp Instructors: (Front row, left to right) Stephen Bennett, John Carlini, Rolly Brown, Steve Kaufman, (back row) Bryan Sutton, Brad Davis, Beppe Gambetta, John Moore

Everyone is friendly and eager to include those who want to watch, strum along in rhythm, or take a break. Returning friends show off their new guitars and tunes, and new friends are made quickly. Campers come from all over, including Europe and Japan. Each is eager to learn, and better yet, to share their passion for traditional music.

The week officially starts on Monday morning with an opening assembly and the traditional group picture. Then it is off to class. The classes are a superb opportunity to meet and study with some of the top musicians in the flatpicking world. Campers get one two-hour session with each of the eight instructors over the course of five days. Each teacher has a different emphasis. John Carlini and Rolly Brown stress theory and scales. John Moore and Stephen Bennett take you through learning tunes and expanding your horizons. Bryan Sutton, Beppe Gambetta, and Steve Kaufman point players towards better technique and musicianship. Brad Davis works campers on ear training and performance tips. Each offers invaluable insight that would be hard to come by somewhere else. Tapes of each class are made for campers to review a later point. A comprehensive camp manual ties all the lessons together.

The amount of information thrown at campers is overwhelming. You definitely get your money's worth! The tapes are a definite must for a serious student. I have already gone back through them to pick up details I could not absorb at the time.

In between classes are good meals and good fellowship with other campers. They are men and women and teenagers from many places and walks of life with a common passion for music. Some are experts at jamming and improvising. Others are novices who know a few chords and tunes. Most are between those extremes. All share a mutual desire to learn more. I was adopted by a group from Minnesota staying down the hall in the dorm. We got together for our entry-level jam sessions each night. They were kind to put up with

the ways I butchered "Red Haired Boy" and other tunes. Other jam sessions for all levels take place throughout the day and late into the night. Fingers get numb at night just like rear ends do sitting through the classes during the day.

Two things stand out as highlights during the week. The evening concert series, where the teachers, other professional performers, and campers share their talents, were outstanding. Each dazzled in a different way: some offered speed, some passion, some creativity, and each was a treat. To top it off with Doc Watson and Jack Lawrence was an extra bonus. Richard Watson played, too. Jack came out to the lobby during their intermission and I introduced myself to him and found out he was a member of the Boy Scout Troop sponsored by the church where I am a pastor! That kind of touch makes the whole week very rewarding.

The other highlight was the casual interaction with the instructors and performers all during the week. They never tired of being asked questions about their licks, creative processes, instruments, or other tricks that have helped them excel. They also invited you into their jams and playing sessions, regardless of your ability. Each day there were stellar mini-concerts as national champion pickers and recording artists sat down to trade licks. I got my picture taken in a couple of those situations to show off to my guitar-playing friends back home. Stephen Bennett and Rolly Brown were especially open and approachable in my experience.

Other highlights of the week included special workshops, on-site expert repair service on instruments by guitar builders Marty Lanhan and Lynn Dudenbostel, and trying out everyone else's beloved instruments.

Could anything be improved? There are a few items. Some of the classrooms were not air-conditioned, which made it tough on teachers, students, and instruments alike. A couple of times my new custom guitar fogged up with condensation after coming from an air-conditioned area into one lacking this amenity. Humidifiers definitely were not needed that week. Also designated areas for beginning and intermediate jammers would be helpful. I got caught in the crossfire between a couple of national flatpicking champions traveling incognito and was completely out of my league at times. Of course I got to go home and tell my friends I got to jam with Mark Cosgrove, Stephen Bennett, Rolly Brown, and Bryan Sutton all at one time!

The bottom line is my guitar playing improved drastically in the experience. Even stepping back and playing rhythm in hot jams was very beneficial. My ear developed, my knowledge base expanded exponentially, and I gained valuable experience watching the pro's demonstrate their secrets and play their best. Like every guitar player in the place, I came away saying, "I can do that." Great playing became a lot less mysterious, even if it still calls for a lot of work. I now know the steps I must climb in order to be a more complete musician. I began work on the first step the day after I got home.

This camp is highly recommended for anyone who wants to take their playing to a new level.

Michael W. Armistead has played guitar for over 20 years and is pastor of Huntersville Presbyterian Church in Huntersville, NC, just outside Charlotte. He was an intermediate level player at Flatpicking Camp, and hopes to move up to the next level by 2001.

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Kaufman's Corner

by Steve Kaufman

Westphalia Waltz

Hi friends and welcome back to my corner of the flatpiking world. The Kamps are now over and planning is underway for 2001. Thanks to *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* for the help in getting the word out for this event and congratulations to Dan Miller for his "Kaufy" Award.

I hadn't thought about this tune in a while and wanted to add a waltz to my upcoming CD—*Mother's Love* (due out by Christmas). This one just popped into my head. The recording you hear is a rough mix from the new CD though all the tracks aren't finished yet. I need to replace the first mando track and add in the Mando Bass.

This is not an easy arrangement because of the sustain required for the chord groups. Look at some of the measures that have rolls in them. If the numbers on the strings repeat themselves throughout the measure, this would indicate that you should hold down all the notes for the entire measure or measures.

You should listen to the triplets to get a better idea of how they are to sound and be played—timing wise. Also the eighth notes will have a lilt to them. You don't want to play them straight time but rather like a dotted 8th and then a 16th. DAA da DAA da etc.

Have fun with this one. I am keeping my text short because the arrangement is soooo long.

See you down the road somewhere!

Bye for now Steve Kaufman

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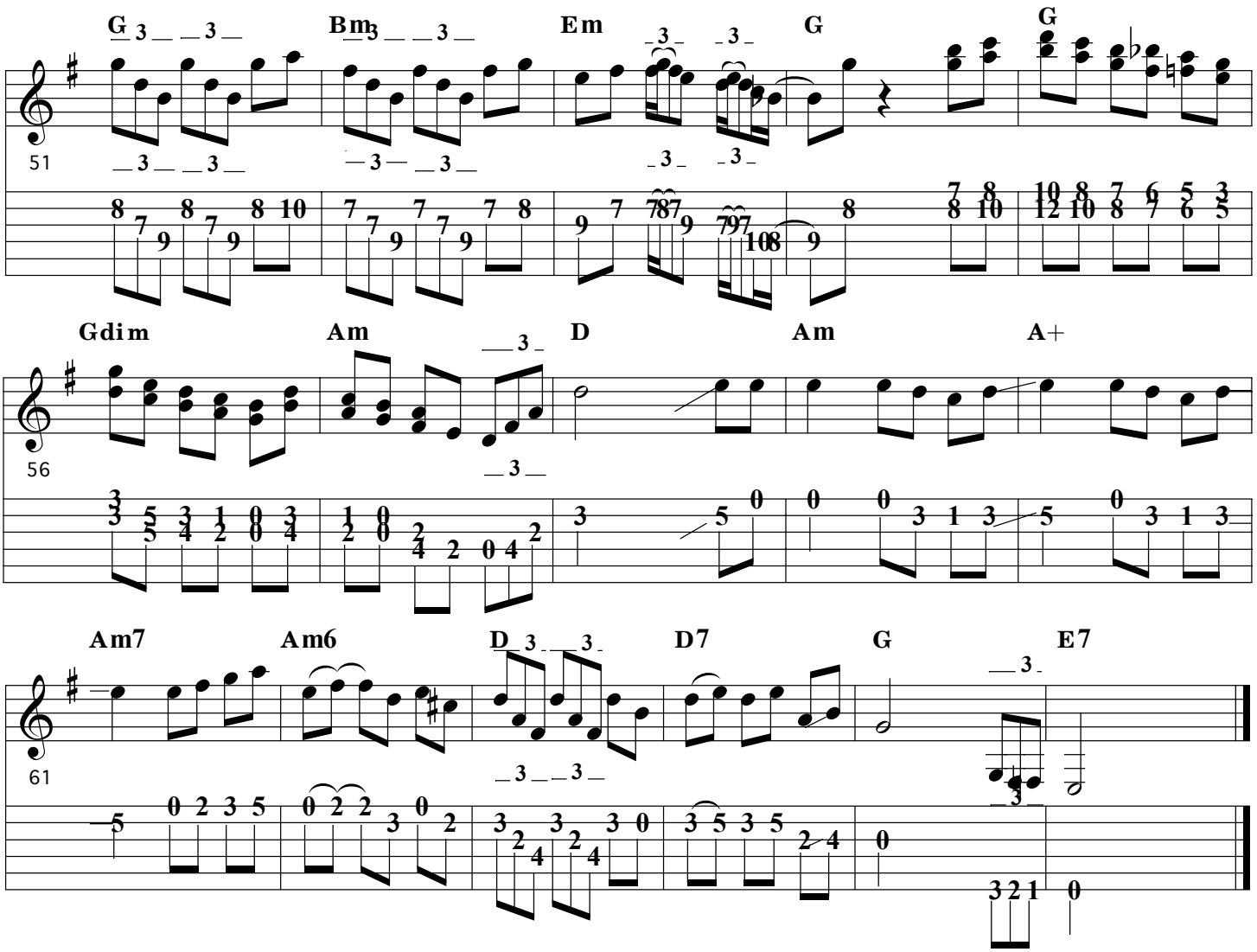
Westphalia Waltz

Arranged by Steve Kaufman

Westphalia Waltz (con't)

Westphalia Waltz (con't)



Flatpicking 2000 **includes 20 songs by 20 different artists as follows:**

Richard Bennett - "Sally on the Treadmill"
Chuck Tinsley - "Prairie Wind"
Kenny Smith and Tim Stafford - "Angeline the Baker"
Bull Harmon - "Bull's Eye"
Stephen Bennett - "Cooley's Reel"
Mark Cosgrove - "Maple on the Hill"
Eric Thompson - "Paddy on the Turnpike"
Gary Cook - "Colorado Waltz"
Chris Jones - "Uphill Climb"
Mike Maddux - "Flowers of Edinburgh"
Steve Kilby - "Deerfield"
Robin Kessinger - "McLeod's Reel"
Betsy Rome - "Morning Dew"
George Shuffler - "Give the World a Sunny Smile"
James Alan Shelton - "Lost Indian"
Robert Shafer - "Westphalia Waltz"
Brad Davis - "Rambling Rolling Stone"
Steve Kaufman - "I Miss You Waltz"
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KC Groves with Charles Sawtelle - "And the World Turns Around"

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Break Time

by Chris Jones

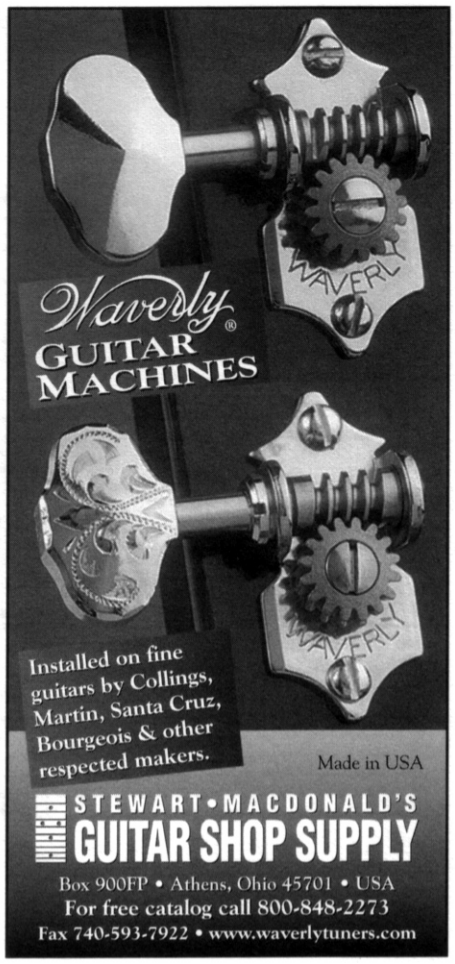
Going Up The Neck: "I'm Not That Good At Goodbyes"

If you're like many bluegrass lead pickers (and I'm one of the worst offenders), you probably spend a fair amount of time within the first 4 or 5 frets of the guitar. There's no crime in this—particularly if you're a more traditional-style player—because the open positions are where we get a lot of the drive and sustain that make our guitar playing sound like bluegrass. However, there are definitely times when taking your break up the neck is a good idea for musical variety. This becomes particularly important when you may be playing more than one break to a song, or you're trading breaks with other guitar players. It just sounds good to get the song out of the same register for a while to keep yourself and others from being lulled into a low, open stringed, key-of-G stupor.

In this column I deal mainly with playing breaks to vocal tunes (with occasional forays into banjo tunes, but who's counting?), and I've tended to preach on the melody-oriented break, to the point that you want to start sending me donations just to get me to stop. You may be thinking now that if you play further up the neck that you'll automatically be straying from the melody with a string of hot lick, string-bending riffs, possibly punctuated with a smashed guitar when it's all over. Not so. First of all, the melody is there up the neck too, you just may need to hunt for it if that's less familiar territory for you. The other thing is that you can play a fairly straight, melody-oriented, down-the-neck break, then add an up-the-neck lick in the last few measures to finish it off with a flair (try to avoid holding your right hand straight up in the air after doing this and shouting "Yeah!").

In songs that have clearly defined sections, you may try to play the first half low, then bring it up the neck for the second half. I've provided an example here from a slow song that I recorded a few years ago called "I'm Not That Good At Goodbye". In a previous column, I talked about half breaks and that's what this is. Even so, within this first half there are what seem to be two sections of the melody. A slower tune is a good way to get used to making this kind of transition because there's a little more time to do it. This solo doesn't go up to the upper reaches (there's no need to run out and order a cutaway), but it does play off the melody line an octave higher than at the beginning (the transition takes place with the slide into the sixth measure).

Note in this break that in the sixth measure, there is a little hammer-on embellishment that is played by barring two notes on the fifth fret with your first finger, then hammering-on and pulling off the second string with your second finger on the sixth fret. Hmm, that sounded more complicated that it really is, but it should make some sense.



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I'm Not That Good At Goodbyes

Arranaged by Chris Jones

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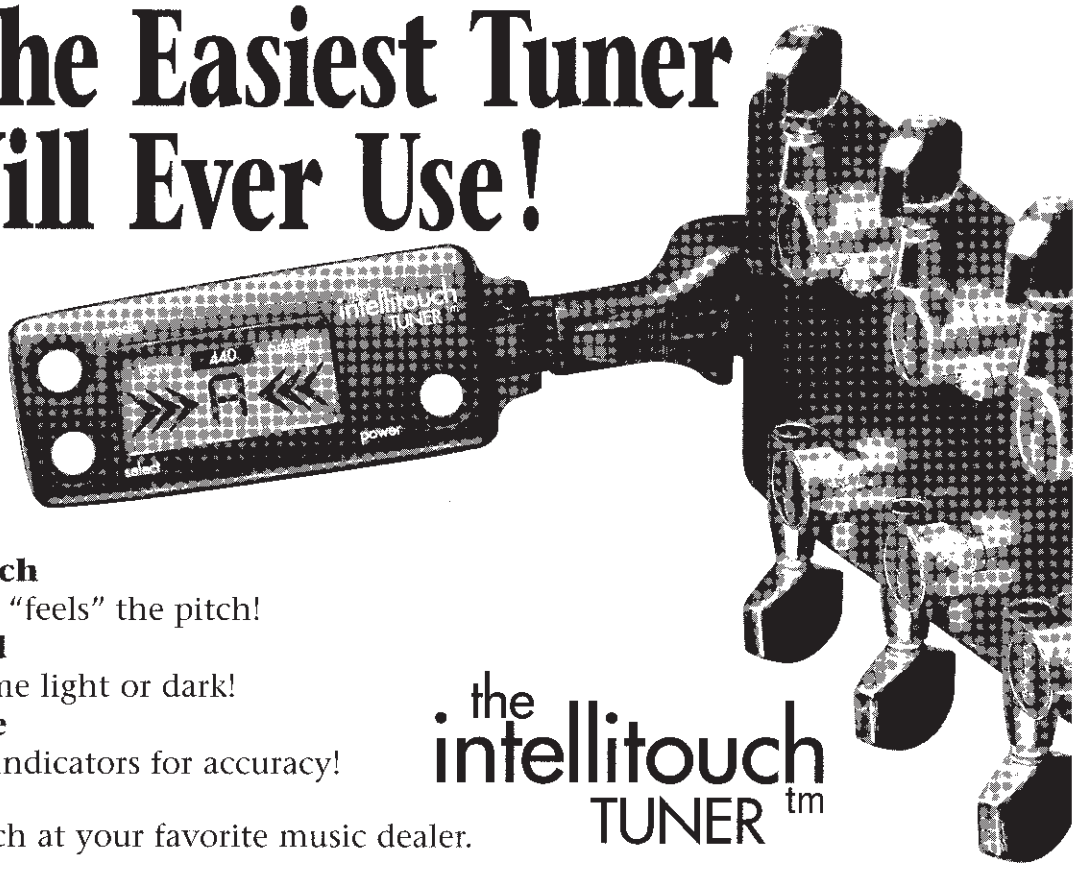

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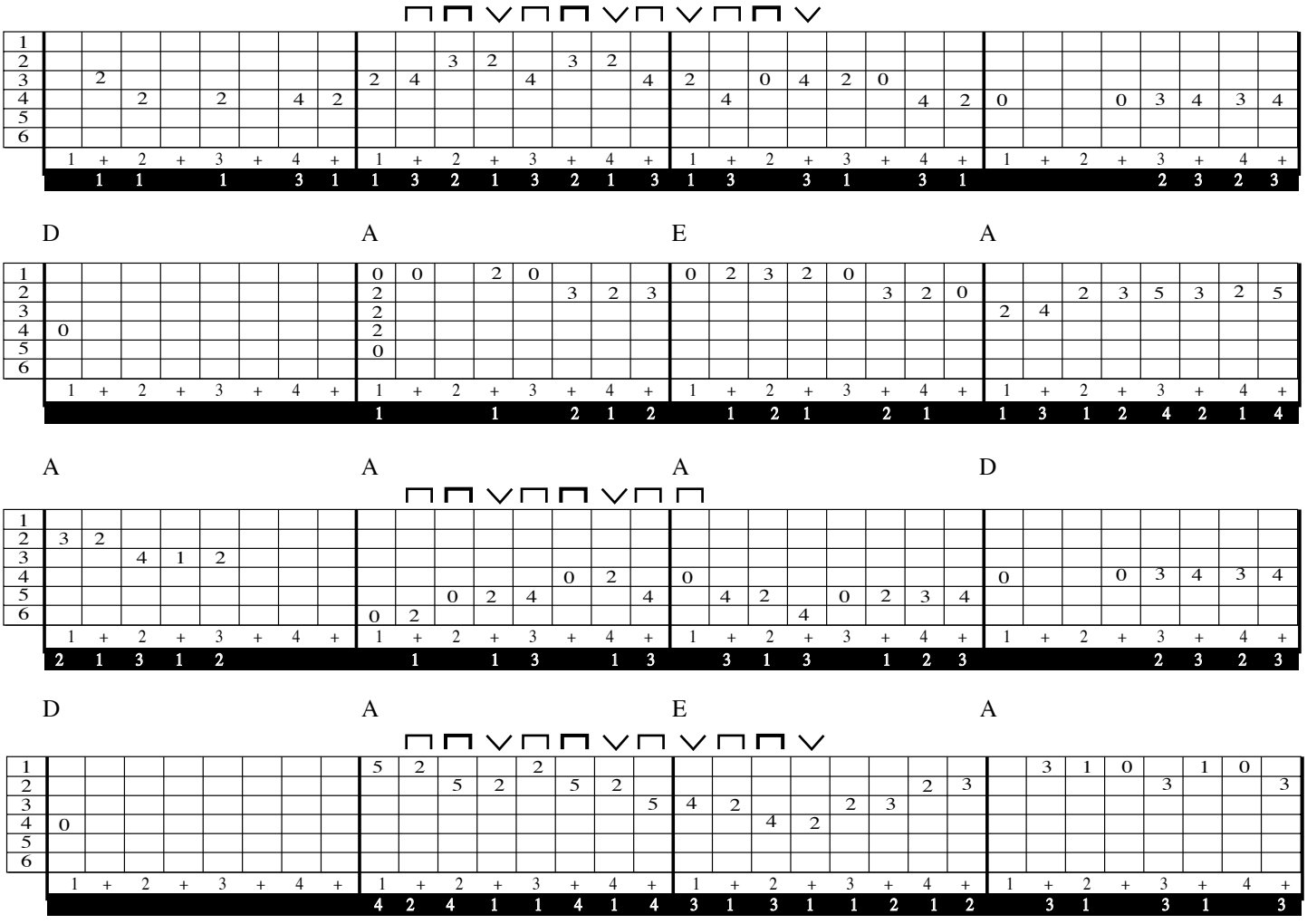
APPLYING THE LICK LIBRARY!

In the last issue I covered a series of A licks. In the tab below I've taken "Nine Pound Hammer" as a frame work and plugged in several of the A licks phrases. Granted, playing in the key of open A does not happen much in bluegrass, but if you have a good understanding of the notes and licks in the key of A then it will only expand your knowledge giving a library of licks that you can use should you need them. I use this open key of A knowledge in many applications: for jamming, for studio and for live on stage performances. I use a standard walk in intro or pick up line to start the song and you should take note of this and try to create your own or just use what I have tabbed out. I have also changed some of the licks slightly so that they will fit and sound smooth. Pay close attention to how I have changed certain notes, because this is exactly what you are shooting for, if you are going to want to improvise.

Please feel free to get on our confidential mailing list or E-mail us - bdmpublishing@home.com. My web sight is bdmpublishing.com. If you have any questions feel free to phone @ 615.262.5066. Box 890, Madison, TN, 37116.

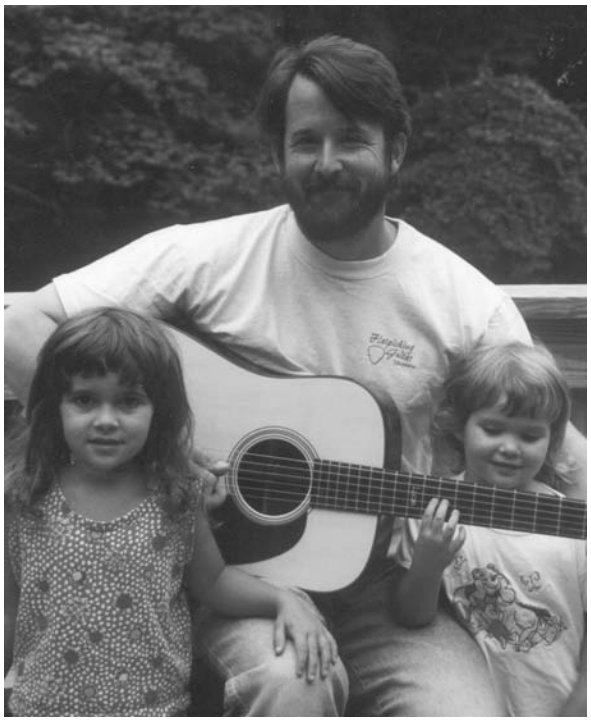
Key of A licks plugged into "Nine Pound Hammer "

Key-A Part one



Dan Miller: Grass Roots Publisher

by Orrin Star



Dan Miller with daughters Emily and Sara

Author's Note: It took more than a little persistence and cajoling to get Dan to agree to this profile. He is basically a quiet person, happier operating behind the scenes or one-on-one than in any kind of limelight. (His response to an early request for an interview: "Why would anybody want to know about me—I'm not a good guitar player?") But—with the continued success of the magazine and with more people wanting to know who the man behind it was—he finally relented. I interviewed him over lunch at the Pizza Hut in Pulaski a few months back. No topics were deemed off-limits, and there were no attorneys present.

Flatpicking Guitar Magazine's publisher and editor Dan Miller personifies a version of the Zen saying that "we teach what we need to learn": he publishes what he likes to study.

Born in 1960 in Arlington, Virginia, Dan grew up in nearby Springfield. In high school he ran cross country. It is a demanding sport, requiring dedication, determination and a big-picture outlook—qualities that would serve him well through the years, and which would eventually enable him to achieve a goal most of us would find daunting: making a living publishing a magazine devoted to a favorite pastime.

His cross country prowess led to an offer that would indeed eventually take him across the country: he was recruited by the track coach of the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, to attend college there. Though the idea of a career in the military had never occured to him before, the combination of a tuition-free education (in exchange for a 5-year term of service), the prestige of the institution, and no other clear future plans won him over.

Life at the Naval Academy is rigorous. First year cadets have classes six days a week; second year cadets usually have Saturdays free, but are still required to remain on campus Friday evenings. Making music emerged as a favorite Friday night pastime for those who played guitar, and Dan took up rhythm guitar in order to participate. Though he had discovered bluegrass in high school (Flatt & Scruggs and Jimmy Martin in particular), and was hungry to play it, his initial playing revolved around the Neil Young, John Prine, Jimmy Buffet and James Taylor songs that were the staples of the Friday sessions. Dan graduated from the Naval Academy in 1982 with a Bachelor of Science in mathematics.

Upon graduation from the Academy Dan was commisioned an officer in the United States Marine Corps. Though initially stationed in the DC area, his training and work as a communications/electronics officer soon took him to Pensacola, Florida (1983-84) and then to Jacksonville, North Carolina (1984-87). At the end of his five year military obligation, he decided to stay in the military service when he was offered the opportunity to pursue a graduate degree in electrical engineering at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. He entered that program in February of 1987 and graduated with a Masters degree in electrical engineering in June of 1989. Upon graduation, the Marine Corps transferred Dan to the Washington, DC area once again.

In tandem with joining the Marines in 1982, Dan decided to act on the bluegrass bug which he had been harboring for several years: while stationed in Quantico, Virginia, he approached a local music store for lessons. While he actually really wanted to learn bluegrass banjo, he figured that was "too hard," so he sought guitar or mandolin instruction. Turns out that for bluegrass they only had a banjo teacher, and so Dan rented a cheap banjo and went directly to banjo.

Knowing that the Corps would be transferring him elsewhere before too long—and wanting to make up for lost time—Dan was soon studying banjo with three different teachers (including Bill Evans in Charlottesville). He also started partaking of the bluegrass lifestyle, catching shows at the Birchmere, going to festivals, jamming.

But with the transfer to Pensacola and the other moves over the next few years Dan's musical side eventually went into abeyance; he hardly played music at all between 1989 and 1995.

Being away from the DC scene and having a demanding Marine career were only part of the story: while in the military Dan discovered martial arts. Through friends he became interested in the original, fighting version of Tai Chi and its 'sister arts' Pa Kua Chang (also romanized as Ba Gua Zhang) and Hsing I Ch'uan (or Xing Yi Quan) and began his study of these arts in 1983. (Collectively know as Northern Chinese 'internal' Styles, these martial arts—like Aikido—rely more on blending with and using the opponent's force against them than on muscle power.)

Dan sought out instructors wherever he was stationed, hungry to learn as much as he could. (He would eventually make numerous trips to China and Taiwan to study.) In1988 Dan started putting out a newsletter on the art of Pa Kua Chang. After two years of publication, the 12 page newsletter eventually grew into the 36 page *Pa Kua Chang Journal*.

(Do you get the impression that Dan isn't a dabbler—that once he gets into something he pretty much devotes himself to it full-bore? Good.)

This was actually Dan's second newsletter: he did one in grad school for the computer club there. And through his electronics work in the military, Dan got into computers well before most of us, giving him a nice technological headstart as a grass-roots publisher.

While Dan was still in the Marine Corps and working in the DC area, 1989-1992, the *Pa Kua Chang Journal* took off: readers

found the information there important and useful, and urged him to offer more. As a result Dan opted to leave military service in 1992 and begin publishing full time. What began as a small newsletter evolved into a full-fledged martial arts publishing house: in addition to putting out the Journal for 8 years, Dan's High View Publications produced 12 Chinese martial arts books and 10 instructional videos.

After moving back to Montery in November of 1992, Dan also started teaching martial arts to students in a local park. In 1994 he opened the Chiang Shan Pa Kua Kung Fu School in Pacific Grove, California, and operated the school through the spring of 1998.

Shortly after opening the martial arts school in 1994, Dan met, fell in love with, and the next year married his wife, Mariann. They have since had two children, Emily (now 4) and Sara (now 3). Since the beginning of their relationship Dan and Mariann have worked together in the business and Dan says, "Mariann deserves as much credit as anyone for the work we have done toghether. She works harder than any of us."

But all was not well in Dojo Land: over time Dan came to realize that he didn't really enjoy the contentious vibe that haunts the martial arts field. Since there is no real way—short of actual no-limits combat—to test the various disciplines against one another, there is rampant speculation and hearsay about who is "real" and "good" and who isn't. Dan said, "I'd do an article about somebody and somebody else would call me up and say 'well that guy doesn't know squat, and his teacher sucked'—and I didn't want to raise my kids around that."

In 1995 Dan started getting interested in music again. Though he had formerly been a banjo guy, he had always been intrigued by flatpicking, and decided that that's what he would focus on this time round. And thus it was that—wanting to extricate himself from the martial arts arena; enjoying the kind of lifestyle and people he had met at bluegrass events; sensing that there would be a market for a magazine for people like himself (i.e. who wanted to pursue flatpicking); and knowing that he had the publishing skills to give it a shot—the idea for *Flatpicking Guitar* was born.

Dan began by purchasing every flatpicking instruction book and tape that was out there, in order to see what was available and which teachers he would want to utilize as contributors. He then started contacting them to gauge their interest and to run the idea of the magazine by them.

Steve Kaufman was the first player Dan contacted. And it was an encouraging first move: not only did Steve think it was a great idea—he also immediately offered Dan the use of his substantial mailing list to help promote it. Each subsequent player contacted was positive about the idea and agreed to participate as well.

So once Dan got moving things fell into place fairly quickly. The first issue was out in November of 1996.

Dan's excitement for the new venture was tempered by caution; he kept his other publishing operation running in tandem with *Flatpicking Guitar* for the first year in order to be sure that the new venture had legs.

And Dan wasn't the only one concerned: early subscribers wondered whether a real flatpicking journal would fly as well. "People would say 'Do you think there's enough material to keep this going? Do you think there's enough people to cover?' Because they just thought of Doc, Norman and Tony."

Well—4 years and 24 issues later—it seems that the answer to both of the above questions is "yes."

As with most ventures run by big-picture people, *Flatpicking Guitar* is a work in progress; Dan is always a few ideas ahead of the current reality. But the reality has evolved nicely, reflecting the interaction of Dan's ideas, reader's requests, and budgetary/logistical realities.

For example, Dan knew right away that many readers wanted CDs to accompany each issue. But it just wasn't feasible at first. So he compromised by putting out an annual CD of tunes from the magazine's tabs for the first couple years. By the summer of '99—with the magazine running smoothly and with Brad Davis offering production help—the time was right. So the CD-per-issue option debuted with the Sept/Oct 99 issue.

This ability to implement his vision incrementally—to know when the time is right for something as well as when it would be premature—is, I believe, one of the foundations of Dan's success. He realized from the get-go that his first priority was to fulfill his compact with readers and advertizers: to get the magazine out on time and to make it good. (Of all the editors I've written for over the years, Dan is the only one who has taken the time to fax me proofs and receive back my corrections and changes; many columns simply wouldn't have been as clearly written or as error-free were this feedback mechanism not in place.) When asked to comment, Steve Kaufman said, "I have found in our business that in order to carve out a living you have to do it right. Dan and Mariann Miller are doing it right."

Other notable evolutions in the magazine include: The Flatpicking Mercantile—the one-stop in-house mail order catalogue for all things flatpick; the "By Request" and "Jam Tunes" columns—giving readers specific tunes they want to hear, giving pickers who had been covered in the magazine (but who aren't columnists) additional exposure and input; the "Gospel Guitar" column—for the large constituency of folks who play mostly on Sundays in ther houses of worship; and the November Roanoke Weekend—a 3-day workshop and concert extravaganza where subscribers and others can come together to learn from some of the greats and to play.

One obvious aspect of making a magazine work is staying afloat financially as it builds. And this was one of the main reasons Dan and his family chose to relocate from California to Pulaski, Virginia in 1998; after noticing the high travel costs involved in regularly commuting east for one full season of key bluegrass events like the IBMA convention, Merlefest and Winfield (not to mention the stratospheric California real estate market) it was clear that a rural southeastern location would make more sense. Dan had always liked the Pulaski area from visits he had made to his uncle Joe (whose wife, Connie, today works in the *Flatpicking Guitar* office). Once Mariann had visited the area and liked what she saw, they decided to buy some land outside of town, build a house, and move the office to downtown Pulaski.

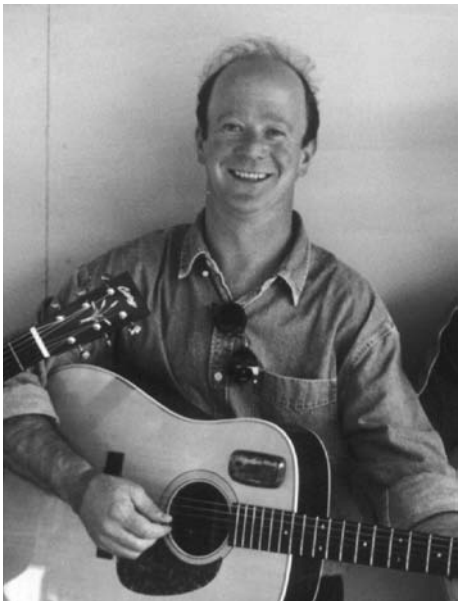
The flatpicking community today is much more of a community than it was five years ago. I believe that there are three main reasons for this: 1. Steve Kaufman's camps, workshops and instructional materials; 2. The Flatpick-L newsgroup on the internet; 3. *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*

There is (to use an over-used term but one which in this case actually applies) a real synergy at work. Steve helped Dan get the magazine going; Dan has attended all of the Flatpicking Camps and sponsored several of Steve's workshops; and both are active participants in Flatpick-L. This same kind of networking and cross-pollenization has occured throughout flatpickdom. With the result that a few hundred people who would only be picking in their communities and knowing their local scenes are now in regular contact with fellow enthusiasts from around the country and collaborating in all sorts of ways. It's really quite something.

And the thing is: it didn't just happen. It took a few key people with vision and motivation. Like a frustrated martial arts publisher who wanted to learn to flatpick and to live a different kind of life.

JAM TUNES

Mark Cosgrove and "Remington Ride"



Over the past couple of years we have had some requests to print an arrangement of great the banjo jam tune "Remington Ride." When we met up with Mark Cosgrove at Steve Kaufman's flatpicking camp and asked if he wanted to contribute to our "Jam Tunes" column and he offered "Remington Ride," we had found the perfect match—a highly requested tune by a master flatpicker.

If you read our CD reviews section of this issue, you will discover that Mark Cosgrove has been a busy guy over the past six or eight months. Within a relatively short period of time he has had three new CDs hit the streets. One is his great duo album with Richard Starkey, *Delaware Crossing*; the second is collaboration with Liz Meyer, *Regions of the Soul*; and the third is his new solo project, *Round Island*. One of the cuts off of *Round Island*, "Maple on the Hill" appears on our *Flatpicking 2000* sampler.

Have fun with Mark's arrangement of "Remington Ride"!

Remington Ride

Arranged by Mark Cosgrove
Transcribed by Brad Davis

Remington Ride (con't)

Masters of Rhythm Guitar:

Ralph Stanley II

by Dan Miller

When I asked Ralph Stanley II about the development of his rhythm style, he said, "I feel like it was born in me and just comes natural." When your father is Ralph Stanley, your uncle was Carter Stanley, and you have been listening to the Stanley Brothers and Clinch Mountain Boys music since the day you were born, I suppose no one can argue with that statement.

Ralph Stanley II was singing on stage with his father by the time he was two years old. By the time he was five, Junior Blankenship had shown him a few chords on the guitar. Although he does play a little banjo and mandolin, he said that he always felt drawn to the guitar and singing. From the time he was five until he was fifteen he worked on his guitar skills and singing voice. His exposure to the Clinch Mountain Boys music and listening to the Stanley Brothers, George Jones, and Hank Williams records when he was at home provided his guidance and inspiration.

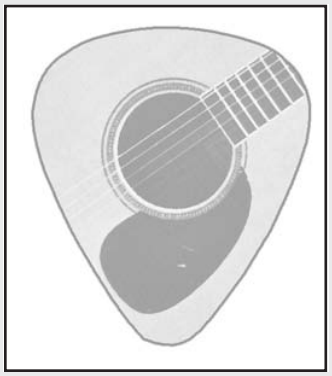
When Ralph II was fifteen, Junior Blankenship quit the band and thus his dad needed another lead singer and guitar player. Ralph II didn't press his father for the job because he said, "I wanted to feel like I earned it." Ralph told his son, "You are not ready yet, but you will be someday." Kenneth Davis got the lead singing job and James Alan Shelton was hired to play lead guitar. As Ralph II continued to improve, his father let him come up on stage and play with the band. He played rhythm guitar and eventually began to share the singing duties with Kenneth. The next year, when Ralph II was sixteen, Kenneth Davis quit the band and Ralph II moved in to fill the lead singer/rhythm guitar role--a job he has held consistently since that time.

When asked to comment on Ralph II's rhythm style, James Alan Shelton, the lead guitar player with the Clinch Mountain Boys, said, "I think his rhythm playing is very full. It is one of the most full rhythm licks I have ever heard. The Stanley rhythm is different than most bluegrass bands and Ralph II has mastered that." James Shelton has hired Ralph II to play rhythm guitar on all three of his own solo projects.

When asked to describe how the Stanley style rhythm guitar is different, James said, "There is more emphasis on the off beat instead of the down beat." Ralph II agrees, saying that he hardly ever uses bass note runs. He says, "If we are playing a Bill Monroe song, I might put a bass run in out of respect. But I normally don't play them." Ralph II says that his father prefers a "straight rhythm" that maintains the time and the drive. He explains that he might punch the rhythm during a fiddle solo by driving a little harder, but for the most part he likes to keep it steady and consistent.

Having two guitar players in the same band can sometimes be problem if the players don't learn to work together. James told us that "in order to stay off of each other," he and Ralph II will usually select different capo positions. If they are playing an open G tune, James says, "We try to hit the same right hand lick, but I use the four finger G chord (fretting the B string at the third fret) and Ralph II doesn't."

When asked about his influences on rhythm guitar, Ralph II said that he listened to his uncle Carter Stanley, Roy Lee Centers, and Keith Whitley. One thing he noticed when listening to them on recordings was that when they held the G chord, they did not fret the B string like some other bluegrass players prefer to do. He liked the sound of that ringing B string in the G chord and thus always plays it that way. Ralph II said that James King once gave him the nicest complement he could get by telling him that he was "Carter Stanley with a flatpick."



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Although James Alan Shelton is the Clinch Mountain Boys lead guitar player, Ralph II is also a fine lead player himself. He shared the lead guitar duties on the "John Henry" cut on one of James' solo records and will step up and take lead breaks on stage if James breaks a string. Although he was first taught the crosspicking style of lead guitar playing by Junior Blankenship, who used a down-stroke followed by two up-stroke pattern (down, up, up). Ralph II said that when he listened to the old recordings of George Shuffler and Ricky Lee, that pattern didn't sound right. He experimented and discovered the Shuffler style two down-strokes followed by an up-stroke pattern (down-down-up). He prefers to use this pattern when crosspicking.

In addition to recording with the Clinch Mountain Boys over the past five years, Ralph II has also put out several projects under his own name. The first was with the Clinch Mountain Boy's current mandolin player, John Rigsby. He explains that shortly after he began playing full-time with his dad, he was at a festival and was jamming with John just outside the Clinch Mountain Boy's bus. His father was inside the bus and heard the boys singing together. Ralph came out and called off a few tunes for the two boys to sing together. Ralph had never met John Rigsby before, but he obviously liked what he heard because he told John, "If you want to go to work with us, you can start next Thursday."

Singing with John on stage and on the back of the bus led to Ralph II and John Rigsby cutting an album together called *Clinch Mountain Echoes*. Ralph II was about sixteen or seventeen years old and John was eighteen or nineteen. The recording was picked up by Copper Creek Records, but has since gone out of print.

Ralph II's first solo album, *Listen to the Hammer Ring*, came out in 1998 on Rebels Records and was followed by this year's release of *Pretty Girls, City Lights*, also on Rebel. He is currently getting ready to record his third solo project, *Clinch Mountain Blues*, this winter.

Ralph II plays a 1997 Martin custom D-28 herringbone that he has owned for just over a year. He uses D'Addario J-17 strings and prefers a medium gauge Jim Dunlop pick for rhythm playing. While he prefers a heavier pick for playing lead, he says, "I can get good drive with a medium pick."

On The Web

by David Dugas

Welcome to On The Web! In this issue I'll cover several festivals, guitar builders, a bunch of sites for lyrics and a few artist pages. Whew! Let's get started…

Festivals:
Please remember that the Walnut Valley Festival starts Sept 14th. Flatpicking Guitar Magazine will be there!
http://www.wvfest.com/

My favorite local festival (local to the folks in North Georgia) is the Armuchee Bluegrass Festival in Armuchee, GA. This wonderful little festival occurs 2 times a year, Memorial Day weekend and Labor Day weekend. The parking lot picking is the best in this area.
http://bcbrown.simplenet.com/bluegrass/armuchee/

Luthiers:
Marty Lanham's Nashville Guitar Company (NGC) - Marty, builds some mighty fine instruments in Nashville, TN. My friend Kim Davis' NGC Mah/Ad dread is a killer geetar!
http://www.nashguitar.com/

Shelly Park builds world class Selmer style guitars.
http://www.parkguitars.com/

Paul Hostetter is the distributor for Dupont Guitars in the USA. I REALLY want one of his Dupont Maple/Alpine Spruce, large soundhole guitars! Schweet!
http://www.lutherie.net/

Lyrics:
BluegrassNet Songbook has 1,115 songs listed on the site (it says so right on the songbook title page! <G>).
http://bluegrassnet.com/Songbook/songbook.html

CowPie contains a collection of tunes by country artists, including one of my personal favorites, Hoyt Axton.
http://www.roughstock.com/cowpie/songs/

Lots of folks in my area like to sing Grateful Dead tunes when they get together to pick, so here's a cool site with lyrics to many of the tunes the Dead covered.
http://www.rukind.com/music/gdtunes/listgd2.asp

Here's an interesting collection of American songs. The interesting thing (to me) is the site is located in Czechoslovakia!
http://svtiwww.feld.cvut.cz/bgrass/texty/texty.htm

Rick's Music Pages has an excellent collection of American Folk Songs.
http://www.acronet.net/~robokopp/usa.html

Motoya Kitagawa's Bluegrass Songs web site contains many of the most popular tunes in the bluegrass songbook.
http://www.nsknet.or.jp/~motoya/index.html

The most extensive collection of lyrics I've come across so far is on the Mudcat Café's Digital Traditions folk song database.
http://www.mudcat.org/alltitles.cfm

Artists:
•Bryan Sutton - http://members.aol.com/BRYLORTTON/index.html
•David Grier - http://www.davidgrier.com/
•Clarence White -http://www.urban.ne.jp/home/koa7/byrds.htm
•Roland White - Although Roland is primarily know for his mandolin work, he's a great rhythm guitarist and a fine teacher! http://www.rolandwhite.com/
•Brad Davis - (Mr. Double-Down-Up!) http://www.bdmpublishing.com/
•Dix Bruce and Jim Nunally - http://www.ejthomas.com/bruce-nunally/

OK, last but not least, although this isn't directly related to flatpicking, but it's BACH! http://www.jsbach.org/

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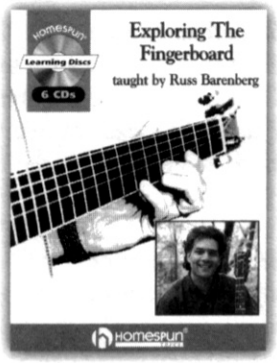

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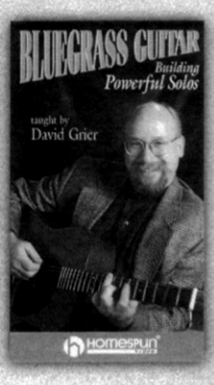

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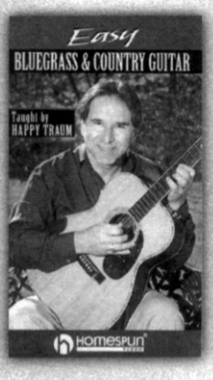

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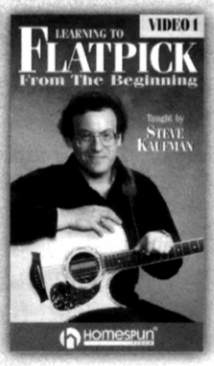

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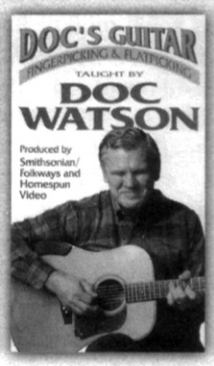

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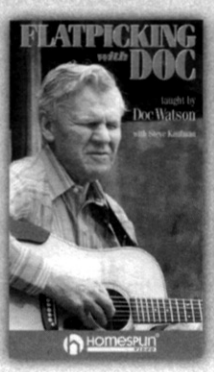

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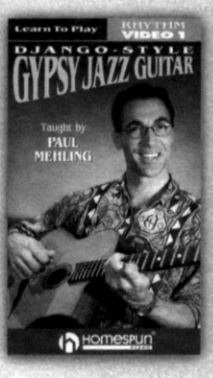

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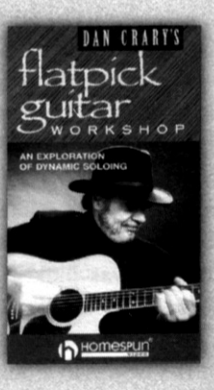

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THE O-ZONE

by Orrin Star

A Simple "Shady Grove"

Though I've always been musically eclectic, playing everything from bluegrass to original folk to western swing, I realized a few years ago that temperamentally I am in some basic ways an old-timey player: I prefer reiterating a melody and altering it only subtly to constantly thinking of new variations.

Case in point: these two back-to-back "Shady Grove" leads. Using a Norman-like combination of melodic bass notes and strums, the song's beautiful minor melody is stated in a way that sounds good played solo—and which keeps sounding good with only the merest of changes. (The only "licks" here are those used at the very end, when the melody pauses momentarily. It is at these exact junctures where Doc really shines on songs like "Way Downtown" and "Streamline Canonball.")

The key to making solos like these sound good is to literally try to "sing" the melody on the guitar: to visualize and communicate each and every syllable of the lyrics—along with their associated notes—as you are playing.

For example, from a purely mechanical perspective, this solo starts with a simple repetition—a "boom chuck-a" on a Dm chord played twice. But in fact they're not the same: since the first "boom chuck-a" is communicating two syllables ("Sha" and "-dy") and the second is only communicating one ("Grove"), I accent my first 'up' strum, but not the one that follows; I need to punch out the melody syllable "-dy." You really have to have at least one version of a song's lyrics in your head in order to transmit it effectively (even if you don't sing).

Sha-dy Grove my lit-tle love
Sha-dy Grove I say,
Sha-dy Grove my lit-tle love,
I'm bound to go a-way

"Brooklyn Bluegrass Maestro" *Orrin Star is an award-winning guitar, banjo and mandolin player who's also funny; his style has been described as 'Arlo Guthrie-meets-Doc Watson'.*

Playing professionally since the early seventies, his history includes three bluegrass bands, a summer with Bill Keith, and winning the 1976 National Flatpicking Championship. He has toured throughout the U.S. and Europe, appeared on A Prairie Home Companion, *and recorded three albums for Flying Fish Records. (He also worked for five years as a stand-up comic in New England.) Orrin performs solo, duo and with his group, Orrin Star & the Sultans of String. He is the author of* Hot Licks for Bluegrass Guitar *(hailed by* Acoustic Guitar *magazine as one of 25 all-time 'essential guitar instuction books') and also runs a recording studio. Online: orhay@aol.com or www.flatpick.com/ostar.*

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Shady Grove

Arranged by Orrin Star

Swinging with "Minor Swing"

by Dix Bruce

A couple of issues back we discussed moveable, closed position "swing" chords and applied them to the 1920s standard "The Sheik of Araby." That column generated more interest and positive comment than anything else I've written for *Flatpicking Guitar*. So, here's more along those same lines! In this column we'll look at the popular Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelli composition "Minor Swing." I'm sure that many of you are already familiar with it. Over the past twenty years it has become quite popular with acoustic string bands of all stripes, from old time to bluegrass to jazz and swing. We'll learn the melody in A minor, the chords, and a couple of harmony parts.

This arrangement is based on Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelli's version, which they recorded several times with their Quintet of the Hot Club of France. "Minor Swing" is also in my new instructional video, *Basic Swing Guitar*, that's just been released by Stefan Grossman's Guitar Workshop. (Guitar Workshop has also just released my *Basic Country Flatpicking Guitar* video. No home should be without either!) In the swing guitar video I teach basic accompaniment chords and technique to a variety of great swing standards (see below). I asked my friend, the outstanding jazz violinist Jeremy Cohen, to play leads to my rhythm and he just tears it up! We played "Minor Swing" as a duet.

I had heard Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelli's recordings but didn't really understand what they were doing until I heard David Grisman's music in the mid-1970s. Before he formed his Quintet, David was part of a string group called The Great American Music (initially "String") Band with violinist Richard Greene and a shifting cast of wonderful players. The band played early versions of many Grisman classics as well as a range of music from American fiddle tunes to modern jazz. They performed a delightfully bright and swinging arrangement of Reinhardt and Grappelli's "Swing 42." "Swing 42" was one of those tunes that you instantly fell in love with the first time you heard it. It sent me back to my Reinhardt and Grappelli records for more in-depth study. The Grisman Quintet later played "Swing 42" and also a wonderful arrangement of "Minor Swing." "Minor Swing" had the same effect on me as "Swing 42"and I set to work learning it too. By the late 1970s, every modern string, bluegrass, old time, and string swing band on the west coast was jamming on both Reinhardt and Grappelli tunes as played by the DGQ.

Grisman has a special feel for the music of Reinhardt and Grappelli. In fact, the format of his David Grisman Quintet, with its two mandolin rhythm section, was loosely based on Reinhardt and Grappelli's 1930s Quintet of the Hot Club of France, which often featured two rhythm guitarists in addition to Django's lead.

Grisman plays "Minor Swing" in the key of D minor, while the version below and the Reinhardt/Grappelli version are both in the key of A minor. Let's look first at the chords.

We'll use moveable, closed position chords with no open strings. These are useful chords because in addition to being playable all over the neck, (that is, learn one position and you can play eleven different chords with it), you can control how long a strum rings by simply loosening your fretting hand grip. In this way you can accent certain beats in the measure while keeping your strumming hand playing an even rhythm. You simply loosen your grip on beats two and four to cut off the sound and let beats one and three ring out more. What results is a kind of a "chum-chuk, chum-chuk" sound that makes up the basic swing guitar rhythm or "comp."

In the chord diagrams below, the small number to the right shows which fret to make the chord on. The small "x" below the grid tells you not to play that particular string and to keep it muted with your fretting hand. The small "r" below the grid shows where the root of the chord is. There may be more then one root in a chord. I've included two slightly different versions of the E7 chord. The first has the fifth of the chord in the bass and the second has the root in the bass. I often alternate between the bass notes as you might do in a Carter-style backup. Once you learn the chords, play through the progressions until the chords, the comp, and the groove are second nature to you. You shouldn't have to think about any of the elements that go into the basic backup. Instead you want to put all that aside and learn to feel the swing of the music. Listen to good recordings of jazz and swing guitarists and play along. Django is great, Charlie Christian with Benny Goodman, Oscar Alemán, Homer Haynes with Homer & Jethro, Freddie Green with Count Basie, Carl Kress, Eddie Lang, Nick Lucas, Dick McDonough, and many more.

There's an incredibly low-priced Django 5-CD box set currently available from JSP Records (PO Box 1584, London N3 3NW, England). I got mine for $28.00! Though it doesn't include "Minor Swing" it's packed with over 125 beautifully re-mastered recordings of jazz classics and Reinhardt / Grappelli originals. If your collection is light in the Django department, check this set out. It is an import and may be difficult to find. DownHome Music (10341 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito, CA 94530 (510) 525-2129) is a great source for hard to find gems like this and they will take phone/ mail orders. If you want to hear the guitar comp totally isolated and practice along with a CD, check out my *BackUP TRAX: Swing & Jazz* book / CD set. Of course all the parts to "Minor Swing," including a few solos, are recorded on the available CD that acompanies each issue of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*.

As you'll see below, there are three distinct parts to "Minor Swing": two melodies and a solo section. We'll start with the chords and the solo section shown below. In the eighth measures of the solo section I've included an optional A7 chord. Django and Stephane don't use it, but Grisman does. Work through the chords and the chord progression until you can play a good groove at 112 on your metronome, which

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is about where Reinhardt and Grappelli played it.

Next play through and memorize the melody. It's quite simple, at least the first version! Stephane Grappelli plays it on the violin. You'll notice that the melody is made up of two parts: the "in melody" and the "out melody." They are two totally different melodies with different chord progressions. Grisman builds his arrangement around the "out melody." In the first endings of each different melody, the bass fills in or solos for two measures. Obviously, any instrument could solo here or you could leave the space empty.

Grappelli adds a little triplet to the in melody. (See below.) You can play it on the guitar with a hammer/pull off combination. If it gives you trouble, play it straight for now. The last two notes of the out melody are played as harmonics on the fiddle. The twelfth fret E can be played as a first string twelfth fret harmonic, but where can you play the last note as a harmonic in the proper octave? Let me know if you figure it out! I suggest playing them both as fretted notes.

When you can play both parts of the melody well, learn the first harmony below. It's a simple flat third part above the melody. If you were singing this part above the melody, you'd call it a tenor. It gets a little high (12th and 13th fret) on the E7 chord, but it is playable. It's also simplified at the end to not distract from the octave/harmonic lick you'll read about below.

On the recordings, Django plays a lower harmony on the in melody, kind of a baritone part, without the triplets. On the out head, Django plays the same part as Stephane in unison. However, in this arrangement I carry the flat third harmony throughout both the in and out melodies. Try it both ways.

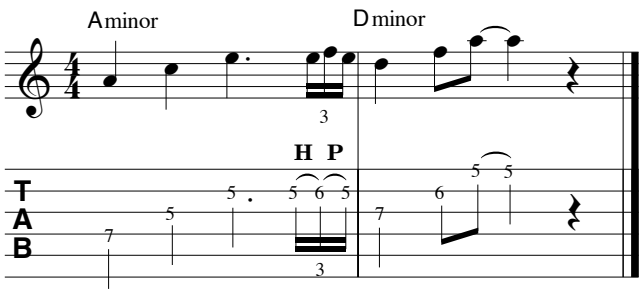
Finally, at the end of the tune, both Django and Stephane play an ending lick, one octave apart (Django on the lower octave) which Django ties up with a couple extra notes and a harmonic. I've put this at the end of the octave melody part.

For a solo, try to adapt the out melody to the solo section chord changes. You'll have to stretch the melodic phrases to make them fit over the chords, but the effort will be good exercise for composing solos. Try to sing the solo in your head before you play it. Take it a measure or two at a time and gradually build your solo based on the melody. As you feel more familiar with the chords, try moving away from the melody slightly to find other notes that sound good to you against the chords. Work toward a melodic solo.

So there you have it, the chords, the basic melody and harmony, octave melodies and harmonies plus variations to the Reinhardt/Grappelli classic "Minor Swing." Play the parts in all different combinations and see which you like best. Keep them in your repertoire as an extra part you can add at a jam session or performance. Your friends and fans will be amazed! Be sure to listen to any of the several recorded versions of the tune. Next time we'll go back to basics and learn a Carter style song in the key of E.

Dix Bruce's two latest instructional videos "Basic Swing Guitar" and "Basic Country Flatpicking Guitar" are available for $24.95 each plus $3.20 postage from Musix, PO Box 231005FG, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523. e-mail: musix1@aol.com Order toll free (Visa and Master Card) 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM Pacific time, Monday through Friday 1-877-219-0441. "Basic Swing Guitar" teaches the songs Lady Be Good, Take Me Back to Tulsa, Minor Swing, Careless Love, Sweet Georgia Brown, Honeysuckle Rose, Blues in Bb #1, Blues in Bb #2, Rose Room, I Got Rhythm. "Basic Country Flatpicking Guitar" teaches Worried Man Blues, Lonesome Valley, Bury Me Beneath the Willow, Storms are on the Ocean, Handsome Molly, Wildwood Flower, Redwing, John Hardy, and Jimmie Brown the Newsboy. Dix's "Back Up Trax: Swing & Jazz" book / CD set is also available for learning chords and leads in the swing / jazz style.

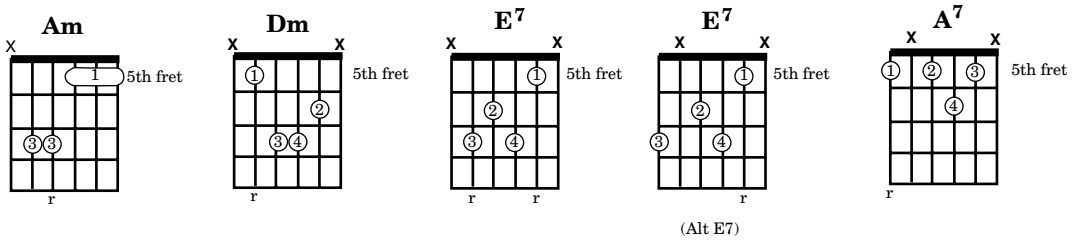
Grappelli triplet lick:



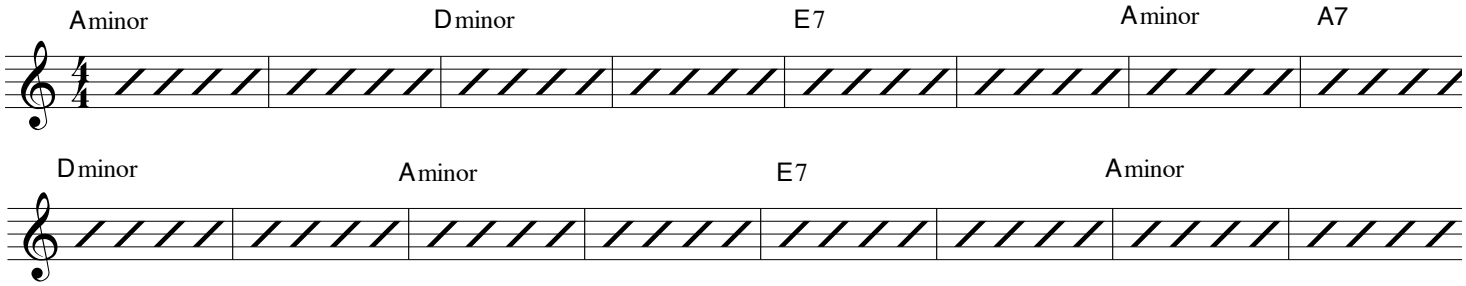
Minor Swing

Arranged by Dix Bruce

Chord Charts:

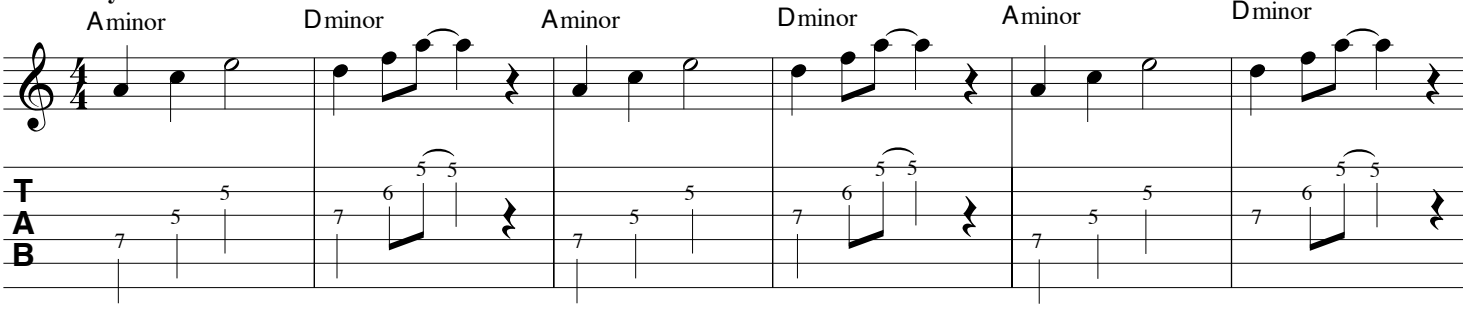


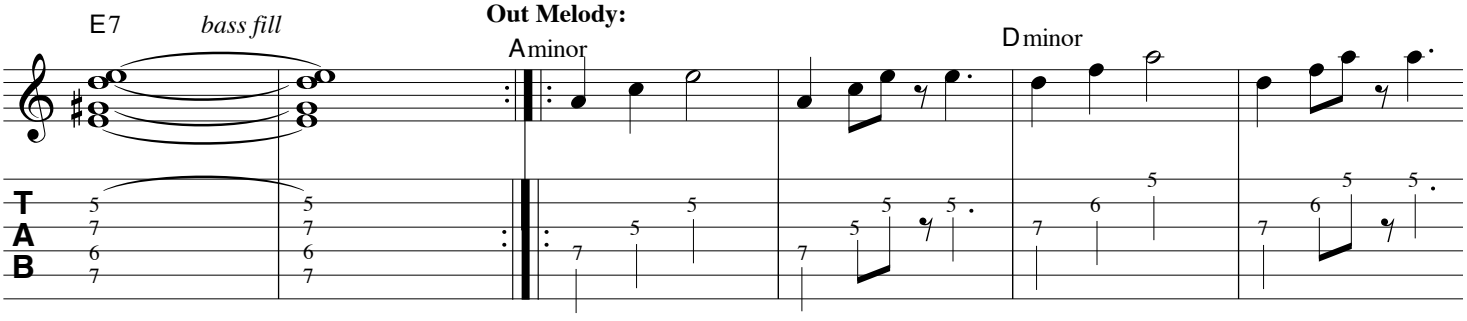
Solo Section:

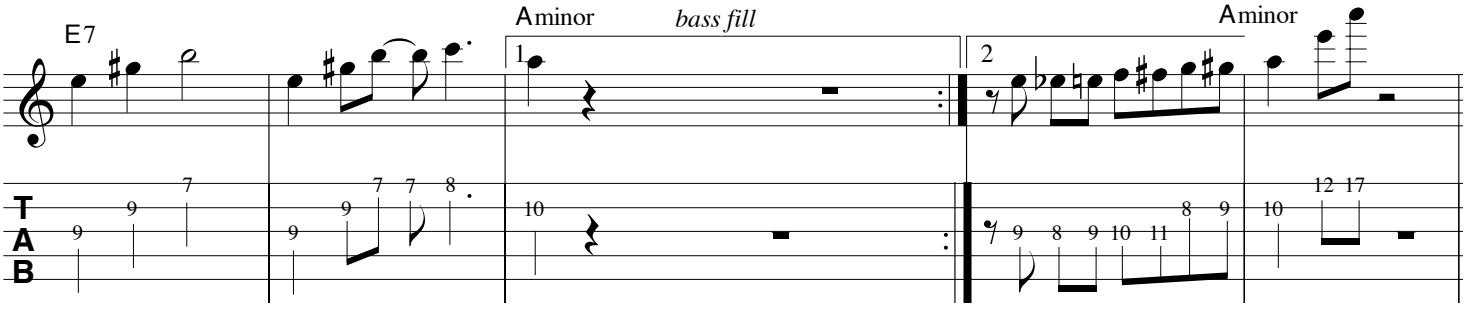


Intro and Outro Melody:

In Melody:



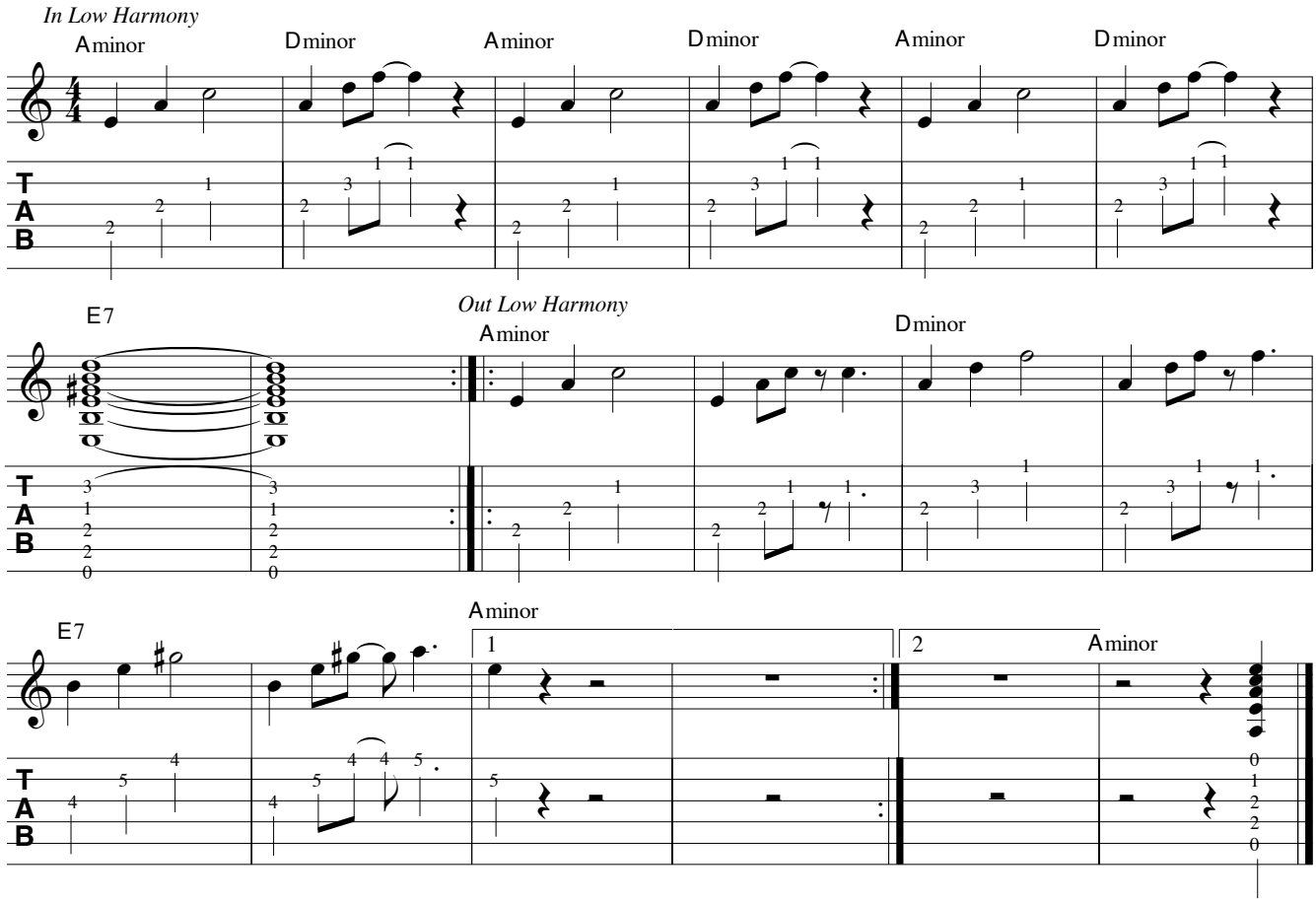




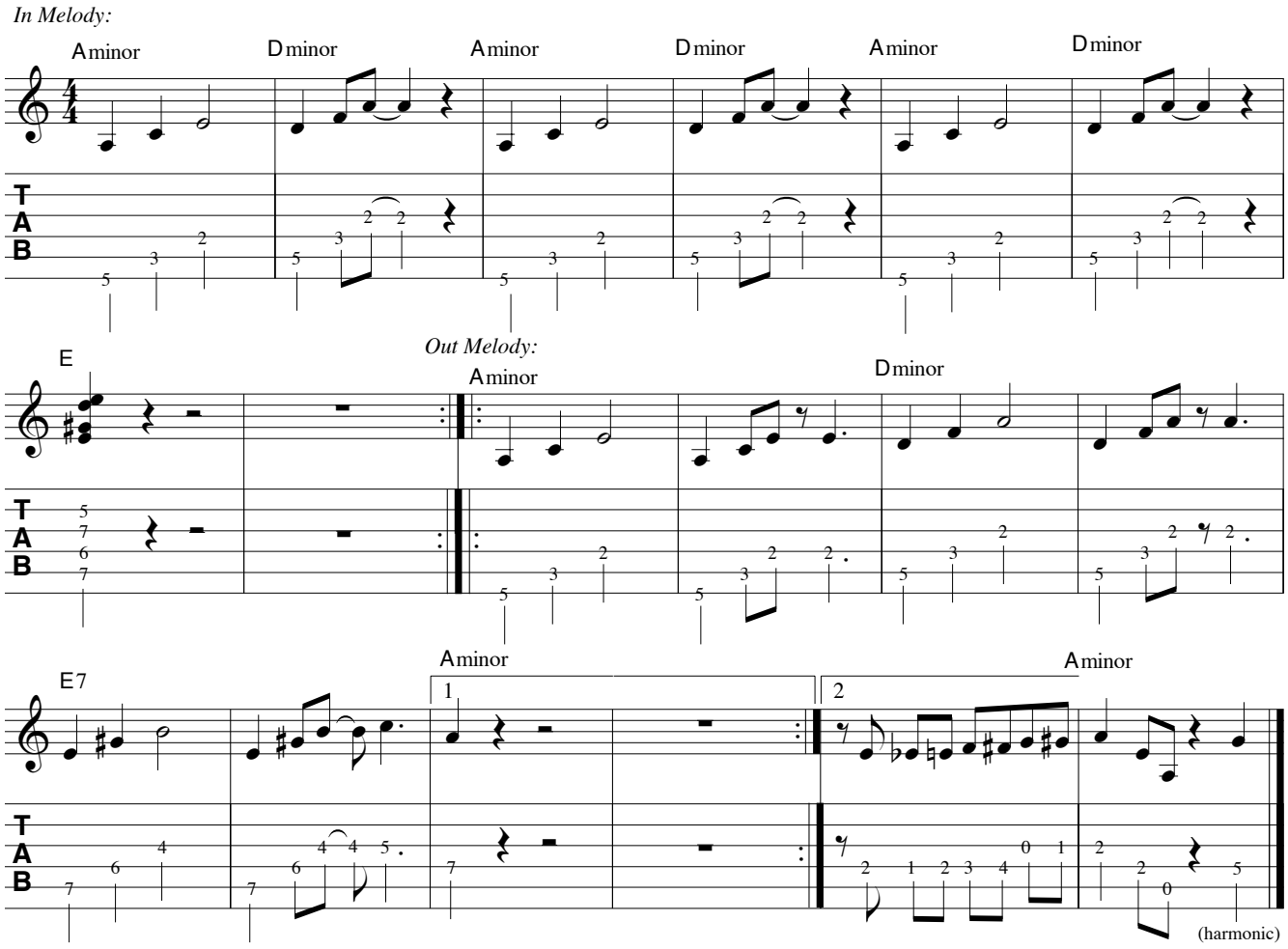
Minor Swing - Harmony Parts

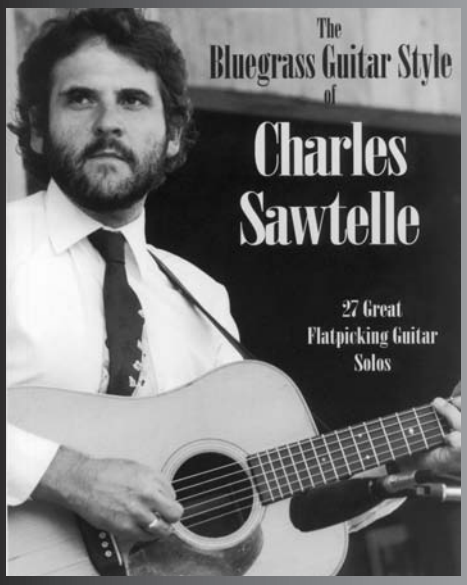
High Harmony:

Low Harmony:



Minor Swing - Octave Melody





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by Michel A. Maddux

A few years back I had the good fortune to attend a masters class with the late great guitarist Charles Sawtelle. Charles, sometimes called the Thelonius Monk of bluegrass guitar, was guitarist with the bluegrass supergroup Hot Rize. Charles bore a close resemblance to Slade, the bassist with Red Knuckles and the TrailBlazers, although they were allegedly different people. His approach to bluegrass guitar was unique, bluesy, and always interesting.

"Art is repetition with constant variation," he told the class.

Let's think about that statement for a moment. Whether you vary the way that you play rhythm by changing the connecting runs, use chord substitions, or simply play variations on a fiddle tune melody, an artist is constantly searching for ways to keep music alive and interesting.

A simple, yet elegant way to provide variations in a melody is to use different octaves. For example, in the key of G the first time through, play the tune in first position, the second time through, move to seventh position. You can play the exact same notes in both positions, and yet the tune sounds different because you have jumped up an octave.

You will recall from previous studies the two ocatve first position and seventh position forms. For new readers they are repeated below. As a note of explanation, the position indicated, for example seventh, means that the index finger is positioned at the seventh fret. Likewise, in second position the index finger is positioned at the second fret. Keep working that little finger so that your left hand covers four frets in each position.

Leviathan Hornpipe

Today I want to present an old-time tune that doesn't get played very much, the Leviathan Hornpipe. Hornpipes are old time dance tunes played at a moderate tempo. Leviathan is played in G, so we will use the first and seventh positions primarily.

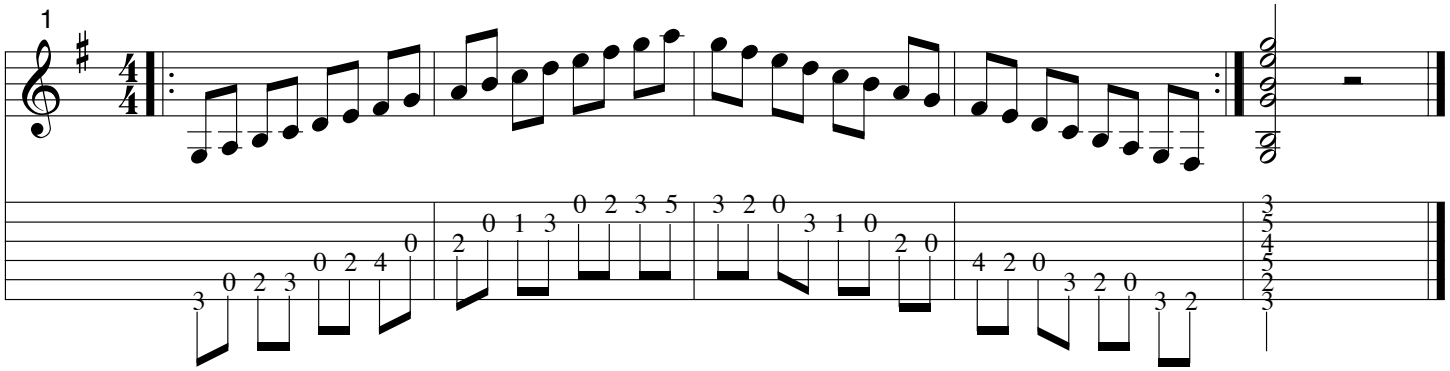
Notes on the arrangement:

This arrangement features the melody using both octaves in first position, then moves to the third octave in seventh position.

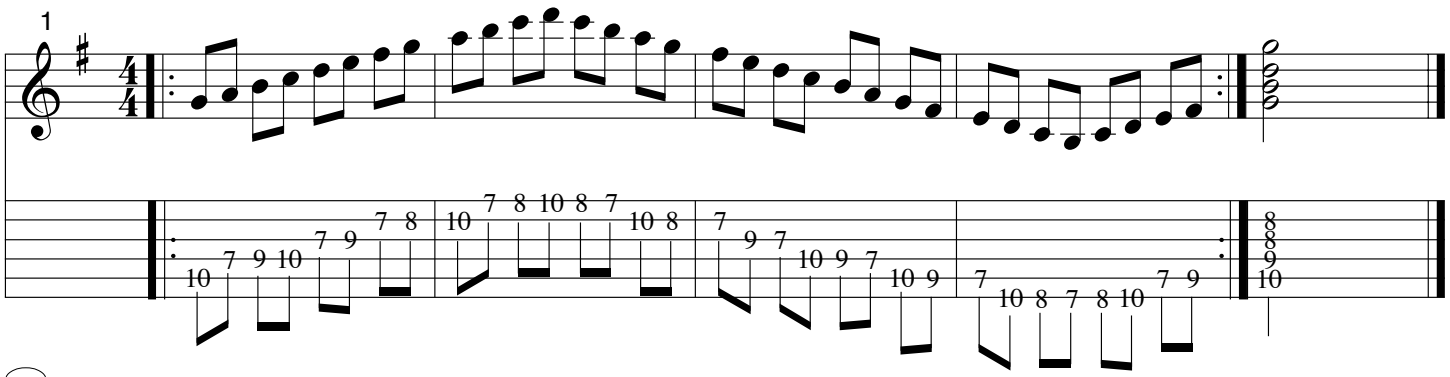
In seventh position there is a slide to the 15th fret G. Use your little finger to slide up from 10th fret to 15th. Pick both notes and let the slide ring. The descending passage is a variation from the standard melody. For the descending passage, let the open E string ring while you shift the hand position. After playing the upper section (measure 34), play either of the B sections, or make up your own. On the recording, after playing section [A3], I then play an improvised [A4] to complete the tune. See what you can come up with.

As an exercise, see if you can pick out the melody in the middle octave in seventh position, starting on the G 10th fret on the A string.

G Major Scale exercise; first position. Repeat 8 - 16 times.



G Major Scale exercise; seventh position. Repeat 8 - 16 times without stopping.



The Leviathan Hornpipe

Arranged by Mike Maddux

The Leviathan Hornpipe (con't)

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Gospel Guitar

with Harold Streeter

THE LORD'S PRAYER

The song this time around is something of a departure from the first four columns. It's the greatest prayer of all time, put to a melody: "The Lord's Prayer." Now, no melody, even one as beautiful as this, can add to the value of the seven petitions contained in Jesus' own words, in which He summed up what man should desire, and what man should avoid. The melody we've all grown to love over the years, however, has perhaps given us more of a sense of reverence for, and an understanding of, Jesus' message.

This column is a departure from the first four in other ways as well. The arrangement is in a tuning other than standard, and it contains natural harmonics. Moreover, it's predominantly chord-oriented, is intended to be performed as a solo, and despite its propensity for being a slow piece usually played in rubato fashion (no fixed tempo), parts of it are difficult - at least they are for me.

Also, anyone familiar with the slow pace of The Lord's Prayer knows that a large number of its notes are held or sustained by the vocalist. Being that sustain is something guitars do not do well, you might regard the arrangement as an exercise in filling space. The idea is to try to compensate for lack of sustain by adding licks or runs we feel are in keeping with the mood of the piece while at the same time not adding too much. As to whether I accomplished any of that, you be the judge.

Having made a confession in the last column regarding fingerstyle influences, you may find a few such influences here, although the arrangement is definitely for flat pickers. And not to digress, but when you think about it, there actually isn't that much distinction between flatpicking and fingerpicking these days. Fingerstylists have been playing single lines with thumb and finger for some time now, albeit with a somewhat wimpy attack, and flatpickers, via a technique known as "chicken pickin", play pinches (two or more notes played simultaneously) with a pick on the bottom notes and ring fingers on the upper notes.

G6th Tuning

Now, a few words are in order regarding all of the above, so let's begin with the key and tuning. I chose the key of G and G6th tuning (so called because the string names define an open G6th chord—reading 1 through 6: E-B-G-D-G-D) to allow for lots of open strings in an attempt to make the piece a little easier to play and to provide sustain. If you already play in Drop D tuning, which requires lowering the sixth string a whole step to D, this tuning shouldn't be much of a problem because only one additional string is tuned down a whole step - the fifth string is lowered to G. Of course, lots of altered tunings have popped up in *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*, so possibly no more need be said.

Natural Harmonics

Next are natural harmonics - also called "chimes" among bluegrass pickers. These are the easy kind, relatively speaking anyway, and they are played in measures 8, 11, 17, 33, 39, and 41. Some occur on the 7th fret, but thankfully, most occur on the 12th fret, which is the easier fret position of the two for obtaining a good sound. If you haven't played natural harmonics before, try this; lay your left-hand ring finger as flat as you can across all the strings at the 12th fret. Your finger should be just barely touching the strings and it must be positioned exactly over the fret wire, as opposed to between the frets. Now play the sixth string, wait a fraction of a second, and lift your ring finger up off the strings. What you'll hear is the same pitch as the note on the 12th fret if you held it down like any other note. If you don't obtain a clear sound at first, you may be applying too much pressure with your finger (touch the strings lightly, like a feather), or you may be lifting your finger off too soon, or your finger may not be positioned exactly over the fret wire.

Next, try playing harmonics on the remaining strings at the 12th fret. If you obtain a clear, bell-like sound from all of the strings, it's time to shift to the 7th fret and play harmonics there. Again, play all of the strings while observing the same rules just mentioned. At first, you may find that playing 7th fret harmonics are a little trickier than those played on the 12th fret. This is because the pitches of 12th fret harmonics are one octave higher than the fundamental frequency of the strings, and because physically, the distance between the 12th fret and saddle, and between the 12th fret and the nut is the same. That's not the case with harmonics played on the 7th fret; there is no physical equidistance, and the note pitches are a fifth above those on the 12th fret.

After getting harmonics to work on the 7th fret, in time you'll be able to move on to the fifth fret, and even to the fourth fret. Both positions are trickier yet, and thankfully have nothing to do with playing "The Lord's Prayer." But just for fun, some time when your guitar is back in standard tuning, try playing these harmonics all on the sixth string; first on the 7th fret, then on the 5th fret, and then on the 4th fret. What you'll hear are the three notes of an E chord - B, E, and G#!

Rubato

Next item to touch on is that funny word: "rubato." Rubato is actually an Italian vegetable dish, so called for its seasonings which come from the rubato bush in Calabria. That's according to my wife, who is Italian, anyway. Knowing that most Italian dishes end with a vowel, I almost bought the story, ready to forsake its

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musical definition. No actually, it's a word I learned the hard way a while ago, from a conductor during a recording session. You can fill in the blanks. I learned another new word the hard way in that session; "tacet." It means do not play. You can also fill in that blank.

At any rate, rubato does mean "without tempo," or at least, without strict tempo. Although entire pieces, such as this one, are played in rubato fashion, more often you'll find just a section or two labeled as such. Whether it be an entire composition or just a portion of one, however, rubato just means that the note values are relative to each other. That means one can legally slow down on difficult phrases or sections, and your listener(s) will often think you're playing with feeling. Now, that's meant to be only partially humorous because rubato is a luxury soloists often avail themselves of, to the degree that they are no longer able to play with anyone else. In fact, Adrian Legg, the famous English fingerstylist, summed it up best when he said; "If someone tells you that you have excellent rubato, it's time to worry."

While playing "The Lord's Prayer," you will probably find yourself exercising rubato quite frequently, as it is a piece that is difficult to play without feeling. In fact, no two musicians perform or interpret it the same way. The same goes for vocalists, with lyrical phrasing varying from singer to singer. The recording on this issue's CD was modeled after Mario Lanza's 1951 recording. To my mind, he was the best interpreter of this, and of many other religious pieces.

Next, there are a few measures here and there that could benefit from a little elaboration.

Measure 4:

Rather than barring the first and second strings on the 3rd fret as would usually be the case, it's best here to hold the first string 3rd fret with ring finger, second string 3rd fret with middle finger, and third string fourth fret with little finger. That may seem awkward at first, but holding the form that way will accommodate the F# note (first string 2nd fret) coming up right afterward.

Measure 12:

Hold the first string 7th fret with index finger and fifth string 9th fret with middle finger. After playing the two notes, continue holding them and add the second and fourth strings on the 10th fret. This is to let the first two notes continue to ring (see chord form # 1).

Measure 13:

What's worth mentioning here is the chord form consisting of sixth string 7th fret, fourth string 10th fret, third string 8th fret, and second string 7th fret. The 7th fret could be barred, but you might find it easier to just hold the sixth string 7th fret with your thumb (see chord form # 2). Measure 16:

The last note of the measure, fourth string 4th fret, is hammered with your left-hand ring finger. Don't initiate the note with your right hand.

Measure 22:

This measure contains a "delayed" hammer. After playing the fifth string open, fourth string 4th fret, third and second strings open, then hammer the fourth string to the 5th fret.

Measure 27:

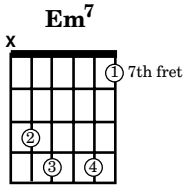
Like measure 16, this measure contains a note not played by your right hand. It's the fifth string 6th fret. Here, just hammer the note with your left-hand index finger only (see chord form # 3).

Measure 42 (last measure):

Here comes a rather awkward finger assignment. You may come up with a better way to do this but hold the first string 2nd fret with your little finger, and the third string 2nd fret with your middle finger. That's to accommodate the double slide that results in a different form - the first string slides to the 5th fret, and the third string slides to the 4th fret.

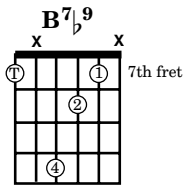
Finally, don't forget the easy measures; 9, 18, and 40 are blank! (If studying all of the chord forms for this arrangement would be of help, just write to me at 4950 E 20th Ave, Post Falls, Idaho 83854 - no need to send a SASE).

Chord Form 1



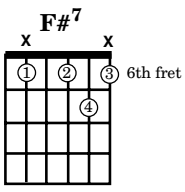
Measure 12

Chord Form 2



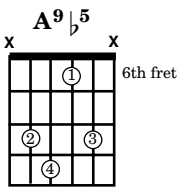
Measure 13

Chord Form 3



Measure 27

Chord Form 4



Measure 36

The Lord's Prayer

Arranged by Harold Streeter

Gma7 Em7 Dsus7 D7 G GΥ7
Am7 D7 G Em Am7 D7 G
(harmonics)
Em D BbΥ7 Bm7 Em7 BbΥ7 B B7b9
(harmonics)
Em7 Cma7 Am7 Gma7 Em7 Am7 D7
G Am7 Gma7 GΥ7 Gma7 Em7 Am7 D7
(harmonics)

The Lord's Prayer (con't)

Bill Bay Presents

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"Mere Point"

William Bay is president of Mel Bay Publications, Inc. He is an accomplished trumpet player and guitarist and has performed professionally on both instruments. He is best known, however, for his writing, having authored well over 100 books covering a diverse assortment of musical topics with sales in the millions.

There is a road outside of Brunswick, Maine, called Mere Point. It ends up in a circle right on the ocean. As you walk along this quiet, picturesque street you see white frame New England summer cottages, glistening in the sun with their flower gardens, flag poles and white Adirondack lawn chairs. Across the road from these cottages is the ocean, studden with rock formations and lobster traps.

I wrote "Mere Point" a few years ago after vacationing in Maine. The tune has a nautical flavor and alternates between the tonalities of A and G major. I would play it at a tempo of about 190 beats per minute, although it sometimes feels good at a faster clip. "Mere Point" serves as a good teaching piece since it never goes higher than the 5th fret.

"Mere Point" is one of 47 tunes included in Bill Bay's *Flatpicking Tunes for 12-String Guitar* book available from Mel Bay Publications.

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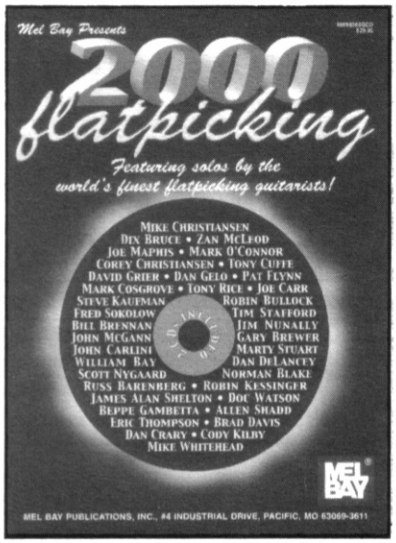

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Mere Point

Written by William Bay

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PICKIN' FIDDLE TUNES
by Adam Granger

THE CANINE SCRUTINY

Hello, mutt lovers one and all! We have here a passel of pooch pleasers. A trio of tail-waggers' treats. A bevy of bowser wowsers. Three of man's best friends' best friends. In short, this column herewith goes willingly and cheerfully to the dogs.

You'll notice right away that the titles of these three tunes don't sound at all doggish. You'd never suspect a thing unless you knew, as the unsinkable Paul Harvey says, the rest of the story:

Gertie's Tune is written by my student and buddy Gary Lidster. When he's not busy making up dog tunes, he's a cop in Burnsville, Minnesota. Gertie is his dog.

Molly Bloom, composed by Alan Munde, refers not to the character in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which is what you might think if you attended a liberal arts college before 1975. Rather, it commemorates a dog owned by Ron and Pat Johns, who lived in Alan's and my home town, Norman, Oklahoma. Theirs was the house you could always go to and pick, at any time of the day or night, and the mid-sixties found us there a lot. (Having established that the tune was named after their dog, it must be reported here that their dog was, in turn, named after the aforementioned character.)

Finally, *Rye Straw*, is as venerable and variegated a tune as exists. This version comes from my friend, fine fiddler and bowmaker to the stars Lee Guthrie, who learned it from Indiana fiddler David Molk. "Hey! Where's the vaunted canine connection for this one?" I hear you cry. Well, it bares its fangs in the alternate titles: *Joke on the Puppy* and *The Unfortunate Dog* (and it's a kissin' cousin to a tune called *Dog in the Rye Straw*). These all allude to an arcane gastronomic fact: when dogs eat rye straw, it gives them, well, the dogtrots.

All right, you curs: enough chitchat! Let's unleash those herringbone hounds and sniff out a few tunes!

READING *EASY-TAB*

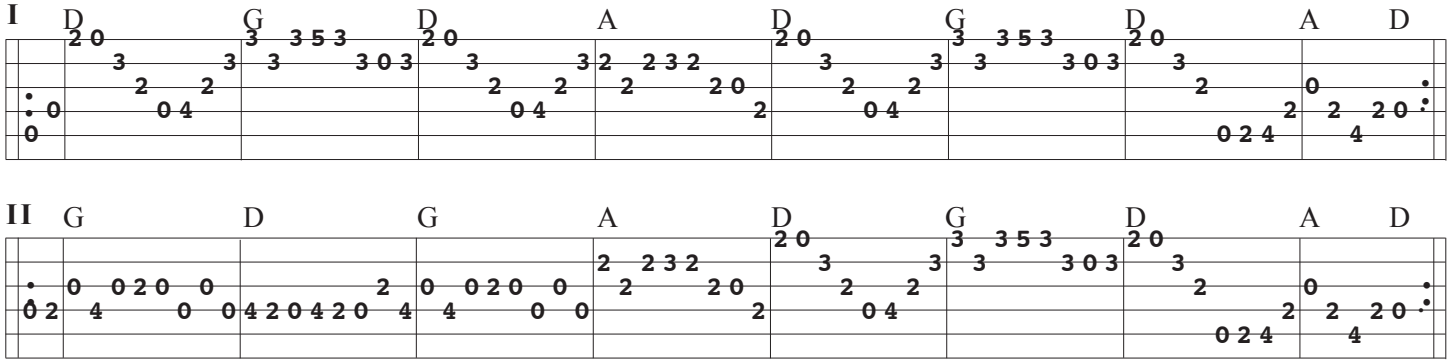
Easytab is like conventional tablature, except that timing notation has been streamlined and simplified. Since fiddle tunes are comprised mainly of eighth notes, *Easytab* uses the eighth note as its basic unit. An eighth rest is indicated by a dot. Therefore, a note with a dot after it is a quarter note, and a note with three dots after it is a half note. There are a total of eight notes and rests

FOR BEGINNERS

Pick with an alternating style: down-up-down-up-down-up etc. The first note of each measure should be a downstroke, the last an upstroke. Include rests in this alternating pattern. This keeps you "in synch", playing downstrokes on the beats, so that, no matter what the configuration of notes and rests in an eight-unit measure, the right hand plays them down-up-down-up-down-up-

GERTIE'S REEL by Gary Lidster

KEY: D



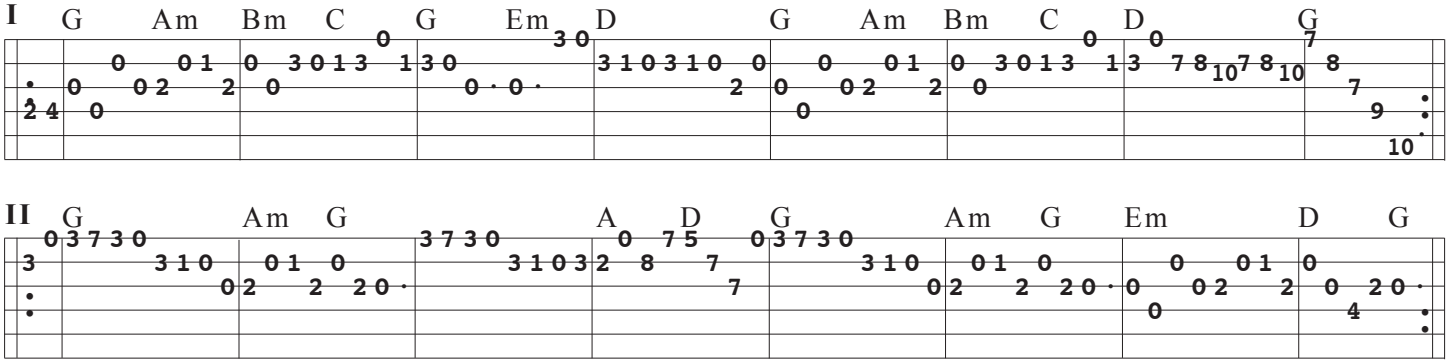
Gertie's Reel has a couple of passages which offer strong hints that it was written on the guitar and not the fiddle, and they both have to do with tonal range–the distance between high and low notes. The first of these is at the very top of the tune. The pickup notes for the first part are low A and low D; the downbeat note (the first note of the first measure) jumps to a high F sharp. This interval leap is not possible on the fiddle, which has G as its lowest note. The other indicator is in the tag of both parts, where a descending run starts on high F sharp and ends on low A, again not possible, unless one is playing a five-string fiddle (coincidentally, five-string fiddles are known to hurt dogs' ears terribly).

Oh, and one other interesting thing about this tune: Remember our discussion about fiddle tune anatomy (V1 N5)and how much repetition there is in your typical fiddle tune and how your typical 32-bar fiddle tune will have only ten or so measures of actual different content and how that makes it much easier to learn? Well, get this: *Gertie's Reel* has only *seven* different measures, and yet it's an interesting, engaging and yet it's an interesting, engaging and completely viable tune. Tear into it!

And now on to *Molly Bloom*. Those of you who already play a version of this tune (and there have been a number recorded) will find this one intriguing, because I present here Alan Munde's original banjo melody. The differences between the usually-heard versions and the original manifest themselves right from the get-go: most folks play the first part theme as an ascending folded G scale, while the Munde version dips and dives as written here. There's some interesting upper-neck stuff in the second part. Use open strings as "float points" and play out of positions between those points and you'll lead a dog's life.

MOLLY BLOOM by Alan Munde

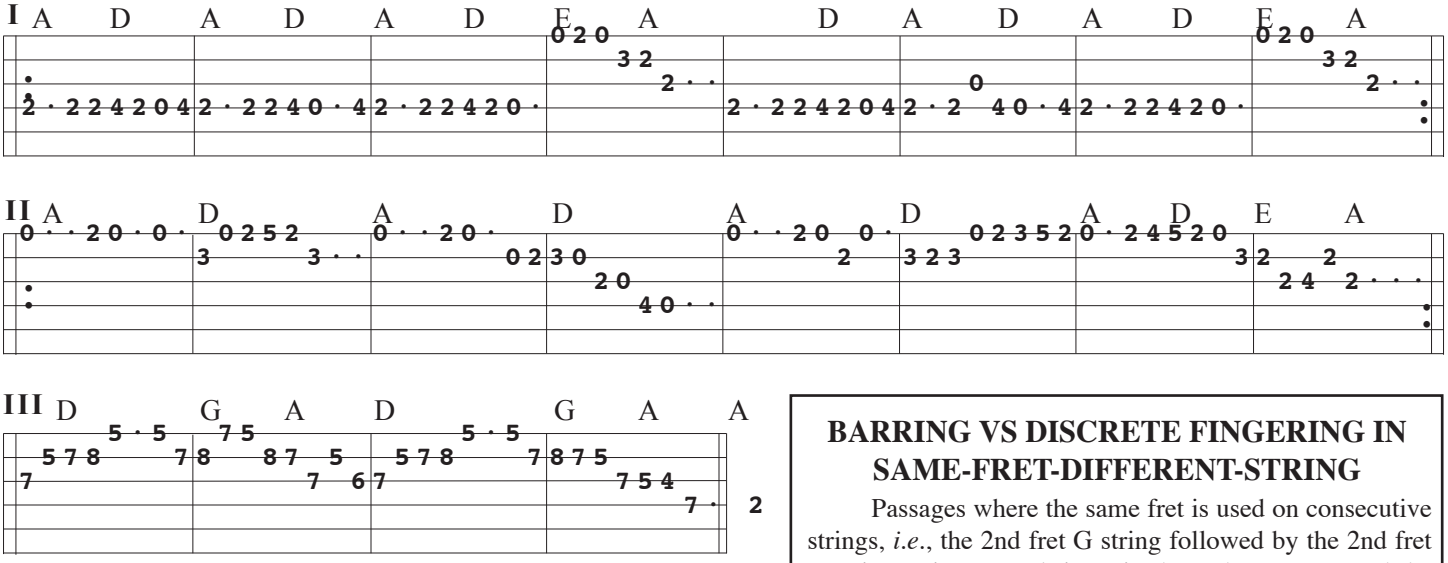
KEY: G



Rye Straw, as mentioned, is as crooked as a three-legged schnauser in a cement mixer (whatever *that* means); it's the only 36-bar fiddle tune I've ever heard. That having been said, it's not terribly difficult. Watch the phrasing carefully, and be sure to alternate correctly (see *For Beginners*, at left). This is one that it would be nice to have the *FGM* CD for (hint hint), in order to get a sense of the rather idiosyncratic phrasing. Oh yeah, and the third part is played using zone coverage in the 5-8 fret position.

RYE STRAW

KEY: A/D



SMART DOG TRICKS. . .

Okay, all you dreadnaught dogs: Heel! I don't want to hear any howling or whining from any of you or it's back to obedience school. Your task is to learn these tunes, introduce them to your jam session or picking group–in short, to turn them into barking lot favorites. And if you do a really good job, I'll toss you a herringbone. Until our leashes tangle again, I remain, doggerel and all, your humble and well-trained servant. . .

BARRING VS DISCRETE FINGERING IN SAME-FRET-DIFFERENT-STRING

Passages where the same fret is used on consecutive strings, *i.e.*, the 2nd fret G string followed by the 2nd fret B string, arise several times in these three tunes, and the answer to the choice the title poses is context, context, context. Without getting dogmatic, it should be noted that this is usually the case in matters of fingering.

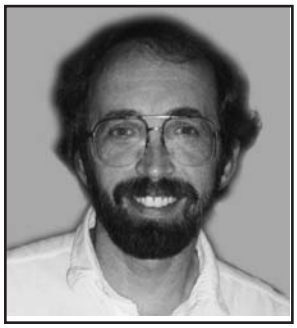
The question to ask is, "What happens right after the same-fret passage?" If the passage returns to that fret, say after a series of "pedal notes," then separate fingering should be used. If not, feel free to bar away with impunity!

Adam Granger has been in A Prairie Home Companion *over 150 times. He collects small knives and padlocks, magazine first issues, old games and* Simpson's *TV episodes. His wife says he collects stuff because he didn't have enough of anything when he was a kid. His 23-year-old son Ben is working on his second hip-hop rap CD. His 9-year-old son Austin likes building things. His wife is a public defender in Minneapolis. His first wife is a musician and actress. His father and stepmother were professors; his mother and both grandmothers were artists; his grandfathers were an architect and a lawyer. His brother, now dead, was a playwright. Adam Granger started playing professionally 37 years ago. He likes fresh air and heights. He's afraid of death and taxes.*

Exploring Bluegrass Guitar

The Blues in Bluegrass

by Steve Pottier



Putting the Blues in Bluegrass

The blues is an important, and I would say essential, element of style in bluegrass music. Bill Monroe put it in his singing and in his mandolin playing, and it is there to a greater or lesser degree in every prominent bluegrass musician since he formed the Bluegrass Boys. Some of the techniques Monroe used include his use of blue notes, consecutive downstrokes, and triplets. In his singing, you can hear the blue notes, and he slides in and out of them. The blues allowed Monroe to express a lot of the emotional charge he felt in the music. Players such as Chubby Wise on fiddle, Josh Graves on Dobro, J.D. Crowe on banjo, and Clarence White and Larry Sparks on guitar made heavy and very effective use of the blues in their playing. If you like listening to these players, then you're ready to add some blues to your style.

Just what is it that makes something bluesy? One element of blues are the blues notes—scales altered to include a flatted third, a flatted seventh or maybe a flatted fifth. Then there are slurs (hammers, slides, and bends), triplets, downstroke rhythm, shuffle rhythm, seventh chords, and open phrasing mimicking the human voice.

Let's start with the blue notes. In traditional bluegrass, it means primarily the flatted third of the scale, and the flatted seventh of the scale. In the key of G, this means Bb (flatted third) instead of B, and F (flatted seventh) instead of F#. If you don't know how to find these notes technically, try playing a major scale by ear (do re mi fa so la ti do), starting on the note that names the chord. When you get to the third note (mi), drop down one fret—that's your blues note. It's always up three frets from the tonic. The flatted seventh is always two frets down from the tonic. In G it looks like the first fretboard diagram shown at right (G blues scale).

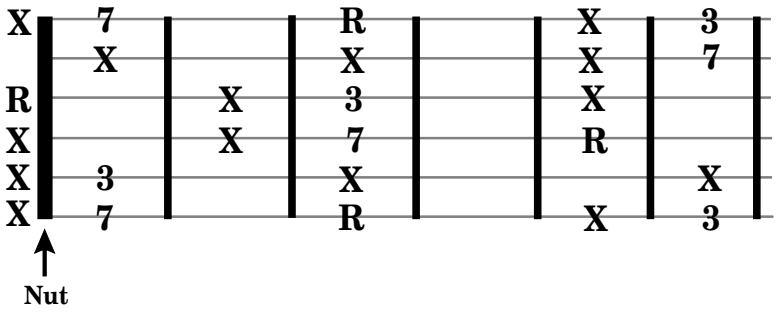
In the fretboard diagram, R means the root of the chord (in this case G), 7 means flatted seventh and 3 means flatted third. X are other notes in the scale. I've removed the regular scale notes of B and F# (third and seventh) since they are replaced by the blues notes. A useful exercise would be to draw a similar chart for the C scale and D scale, a locator for finding the blue notes. If you do this you'll see some patterns start to crop up.

Now look at the second fretboard diagram. This is the same chart with a few notes removed, specifically, those that are only one fret away from the blue notes. What you have here is a five note scale (pentatonic). Between the 3rd and 6th frets you find the classic "Lead Box" found in so many blues and rock guitar books. In general, I've found that the players who use this box to play bluegrass solos sound like rock players trying to play bluegrass, rather than like soulful bluegrass players. This is only a minor caution—Tony Rice uses this box a lot on the first 3 strings. The difference is that he doesn't stay in the box, but changes position to take advantage of open strings as well, a major factor in bluegrass style.

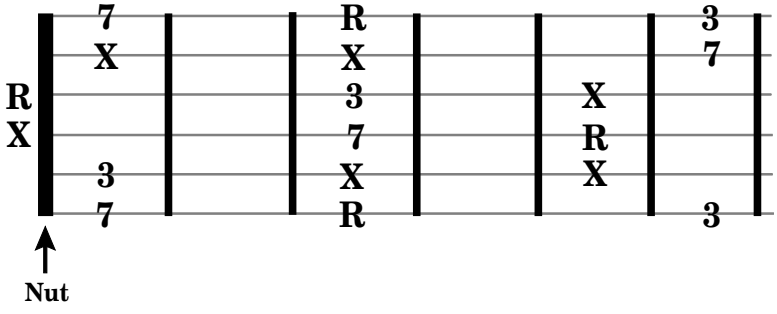
Okay, we've got some idea of where the blue notes are at, how about a tune incorporating them—something like "Clinch Mt. Backstep." You'll find this tab on the next page.

Get some recordings of those players mentioned above, listen for how they put blues notes in their playing. Make some locator charts to find the blues notes. Try fooling around with tunes you already know a break to, but substituting some flatted thirds and sevenths to see what it sounds like. This is the essence of developing your own style—see what it sounds like, if you like it its yours! Don't worry, as you listen more you will find that you will throw away some of the stuff you like now, but some of the stuff you like.

G Blues Scale Diagram



G Pentatonic Scale Diagram



Clinch Mountain Backstep Example

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John McGann's Eclectic Acoustic

Sailor on the Rock

I learned this reel from the great Irish fiddling duo Andy McGann and Paddy Reynolds' Shanachie LP (now available on CD). As usual, I try to combine left hand slurs (hammers and pulls) with picked notes to break up the articulation. I'm a firm believer that flatpicking should never sound like typing.

There are a few variations on the A part on the fast versions. Like many players, I try to improvise within the confines of the style.The subtle variations that happen from performance to performance can help breathe life into a tune. Unlike bluegrass, Irish music in its traditional form doesn't feature "breaks" or improvised solos; it is closer to classical music in that "the tune" is always the focal point. The challenge in this style is to create ornaments (turns, triplets, etc.) that add variety while keeping the melody up front at all times.

John McGann is part of the duo Rust Farm, whose new CD "Snows of March" was produced by Tim O'Brien and is now available at http://www.cdfreedom.com/rustfarm John McGann's new web address is www.johnmcgann.com

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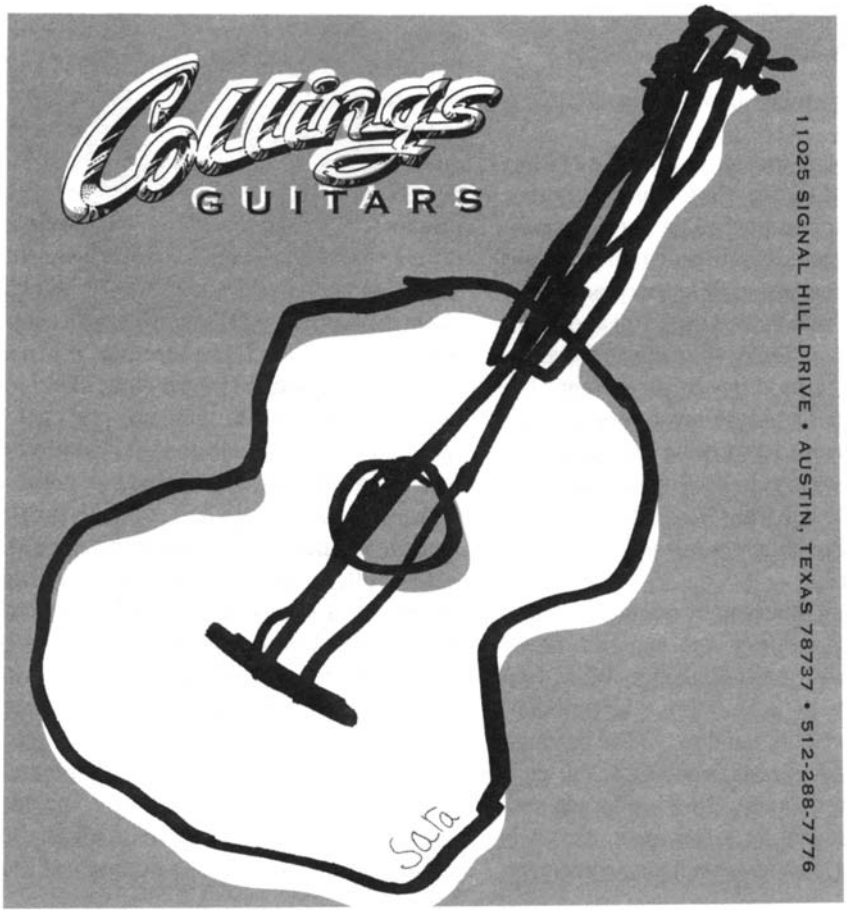


Sailor On The Rock

Arranged by John McGann

Sailor On The Rock - A Part Variations

New Release Highlight
Steve Kilby: *Plain & Fancy*
by Dan Miller

The idea for Steve Kilby's new CD *Plain & Fancy* was born over twenty years ago during a jam session at a camp site at the Galax Fiddler's convention. After winning the Galax guitar competition that year, Steve was hanging out and picking at the festival with his friend Wayne Henderson. Wayne introduced Steve to one of his friends, Robin Kessinger. Robin, in turn, said, "I want you guys to meet this buddy of mine." Robin then took Steve and Wayne over to the camp site of his picking buddy, Steve Kaufman. Naturally, a jam ensued with Kilby, Henderson, Kessinger, Kaufman, and Doug Rorrer sharing the guitar duties, Randy Greer on mandolin, and Butch Barker on bass. Steve Kilby says, "As we were picking, it started getting darker and darker. I thought the sun was setting. When I looked up, I realized that it was because the crowd around us kept getting bigger and blocking out the sun." On that weekend in 1979 the four guitar pickers talked about the possibility of recording together.

Over the years Steve Kilby tried a number of times to pull all four players together, but everyone was so busy it never worked out. Steve said, "I would call Steve or Robin and try to arrange a time, Steve would say, 'I want to do it, but I can't do it next week because I'm off to Alaska,' and Robin was busy going to Ireland and different places. They had both moved on to higher briars and bigger berries." Finally, with *Plain & Fancy* Steve decided to record separately with each of the other three and put all the cuts on his own CD. Of the sixteen tunes presented here, Henderson plays in duo with Kilby on two ("Bye Bye Blues" and "Sweet Georgia Brown"), Kessinger on two ("Big Sandy River" and "Bill Bailey"), and Kaufman on two ("Alabama Jubilee" and "Beaumont Rag"). Additionally, all four play together on "Down Yonder." As if that was not enough, Steve also brought George Shuffler in the studio to record "Will You Miss Me" and "Nine Pound Hammer" with him. George's brother, John Shuffler, plays bass on four cuts. The instrumentation on all of the cuts includes lead guitar, rhythm guitar, and bass.

In addition to the nine cuts Steve plays with the pickers mentioned above, he also plays fine solo guitar arrangements of "Jerusalem Ridge," "Red Haired Boy," "Black Mountain Rag," "Listen to the Mockingbird," "Fiddle Tune Medley" and two original tunes, "Deerfield" and "New River Waltz." His slow tempo version of "Red Haired Boy," with some skillfully executed crosspicking, and his original tune "Deerfield" are two of my favorite cuts on the recording. I also enjoyed his "Fiddle Tune Medley" because the three songs he chose to present—"Fishin' Creek," "Marmaduke's Hornpipe," and "The Staten Island Hornpipe,"—are tunes that you don't hear very often from guitar players.

Steve did a good job at mixing things up on this CD. Looking at the song list, you might imagine that this CD had the potential to turn into a big fiddle tune "deedle-fest"—but it doesn't. Steve's song selection and arrangements, combined with the order in which the songs are presented and the diverse playing styles of the four guest guitarists, does not give the listener the feeling of every song sounding the same as the last. In fact, I had a lot of fun trying to guess which guest appeared on each cut before looking at the liner notes. Steve Kilby is a self-made flatpicker in that he did not learn to flatpick the guitar by listening to other guitar players. He learned how to play lead guitar directly from his grandfather's fiddle playing. This gives his style a refreshing uniqueness.

Steve was born and raised in North Wilkesboro, North Carolina. His father, Curly Kilby, was a well known guitar player who played in several North Carolina bluegrass groups in the early 1950s. Unfortunately for Steve, his father passed away from a kidney disease in 1956 when Steve was not yet two years old. Steve was raised by his maternal grandparents and learned how to play music, starting at the age of twelve, from his paternal grandfather, Cranor Kilby. Steve said, "My grandfather was my biggest musical influence. He ran a barber shop out of his home and one Saturday my grandmother taught me three chords on the guitar. When my grandfather came in to eat lunch, I showed him what I could do. He said, 'Well, if you can do that, I can teach you some more.' He didn't go back to the barber shop that afternoon. We sat the rest of the day and he taught me some more chords and showed me how to play 'Wildwood Flower.' "

Steve continued learning new tunes from his grandfather and shortly thereafter the two began playing together as a duo. Steve was mostly backing up his grandfather's fiddle playing, but says, "He used to let me do that little solo guitar lick in 'Down Yonder.' I really liked to do that. When I was just a fourteen year old kid that was great."

When Steve was about fifteen he started learning lead guitar breaks to tunes like "Soldier's Joy," "Arkansas Traveler," and "Ragtime Annie." Steve had no formal instruction. He says his method for learning lead guitar was to listen to what his grandfather was playing on the fiddle and then "hunt and peck" until he found the notes on the guitar. Steve says, "When my grandfather saw that I could do it, he started letting me trade leads with him. He saw that people liked it." Steve and his grandfather played for family, friends, and neighbors around the house, the barber shop and at local dances. Steve says, "We hardly ever had anyone play with us. It was always just the two of us. He could play fiddle, clawhammer banjo, and harmonica (which he called a 'French harp'). He

would switch around on those things and play lots of different old-time tunes and fiddle tunes."

When Steve was about eighteen years old he started getting interested in bluegrass music. Before Steve had his driver's license a local player, Morris Beshears, heard Steve play at a local music store and said, "Hey, you are pretty good. Have you ever been to any of the fiddler's conventions?" Steve hadn't. Morris came to Steve's house and talked to his grandmother about letting Steve go to some music festivals with him. Steve says, "He introduced me to a lot in the bluegrass world. He would take me to a fiddler's convention and at first I would just watch people because I was afraid to play. But I absorbed a lot and learned from what other people were doing. I soon started playing at the fiddler's conventions and also got into a local bluegrass band with Morris."

When first introduced to bluegrass music, Steve became interested in Scruggs style banjo playing and pursued the banjo when he was in his early twenties. However, at a festival in 1972 a local guitar player, Ray Cline, asked if Steve wanted to pick and handed him a guitar. The two started playing guitar tunes and at one point Ray said, "If you are that good on guitar, why are you messing with the banjo? Look around here--the woods are full of banjo pickers and I am the only guy playing lead guitar. You ought to stick with the guitar. Steve said, "That got me thinking that maybe I could do that. So he was a big influence on me." After graduating from high school Ray Cline helped Steve got a job playing with a local band, Hoyt Herbert and the Strings of Five. Steve played with that band for five or six years. He says that the band traveled and played a lot throughout the south in Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina.

After playing with Hoyt Herbert's band, Steve played with a number of local bands in North Carolina. In 1985, he eventually got a more steady gig playing with Garland Shuping and Wild Country. The band mostly played in North and South Carolina. Steve stayed with Garland's band until 1991. Since that time he has been playing with a few bands that he has put together and most recently has been playing in duo with his wife, Penny.

To support his bluegrass habit, Steve held a job in a furniture factory in North Wilkesboro, North Carolina, for twenty-four years. He recently retired and moved to Piney Creek, North Carolina, where he and Penny have started a business called Alleghany Music Company. In addition to producing his new CD, Steve teaches guitar workshops and gives guitar lessons. He and Penny have also put together a show called "Echoes of the Blueridge." The program traces the musical traditions of the region where they live. Steve says, "I play tunes that my grandfather taught me exactly the way he played them and then I play my own arrangements of them to show how the music has evolved."

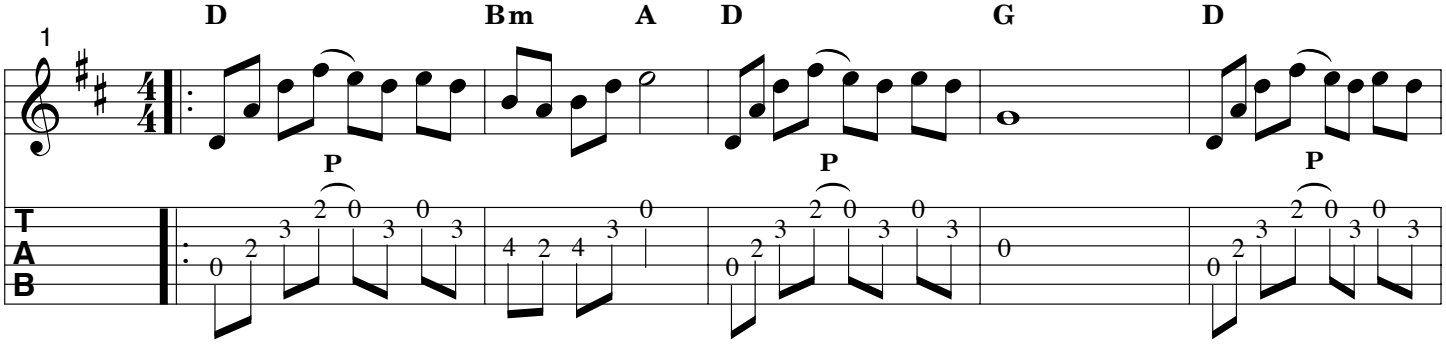
One of the interesting teaching positions Steve has become involved in is an after school program in Alleghany County, North Carolina, that is introducing traditional music to children from grades five through eight. Steve says, "We are reintroducing their musical heritage to them. The part of the country where we live, in the Blueridge Mountains, is rich with old-time, bluegrass, and traditional music, but in recent years not a lot of the young people have gotten into it. The music will fade away if you don't teach young people the tunes that the old timers know." In the program, classes are offered for guitar, banjo, and fiddle. In addition to learning the tunes on their respective instruments, the kids are also taught the history of the songs and the people who played them.

Steve owns and plays several different guitars. His most valued is a "near-mint" 1936 Martin D-28. He also owns a 1948 sunburst Martin D-18, a 1954 Martin D-18, and a 1939 Gibson L-7. He used all four of these guitars on his recording. Steve uses D'Addario EJ-17 strings and John Pearse medium gauge strings. He says, "I've found that certain strings sound good on certain guitars. I have found that my old herringbone sounds good with the EJ-17s on it. But my D-18 sounds good with the John Pearse strings on it." Steve prefers the 1.00 mm white Clayton picks.

For more information about Steve, visit his website: www.alleghanymusic.com

Deerfield

Written by Steve Kilby



Deerfield (con't)

Reviews

CD Reviews

Lonesome River Band
Talkin' to Myself
Sugar Hill CD 3913

Reviewed by Bryan Kimsey

The LRB's current release is here and it sounds as good as their past two albums. You could put all three on a CD changer and be hard-pressed to tell them apart. Now, that's not a bad thing at all if you like hard-driving, well-executed well-sung bluegrass. Like most great bluegrass bands, LRB definitely has a fingerprint sound. It's true the band has added Rickie Simpkins on fiddle, but he really doesn't change their recorded sound much because they've always used guest stars. In fact, that IS one difference in this album--with the exception of Dan Tyminski singing tenor on one cut, this is all LRB with no guests. What you hear here is what you'll get when you see them live.

Great bluegrass, sure, but what's here for flatpicking fans? Well, Kenny Smith is here. If I counted right, Kenny takes a break on every song, with a real pretty solo on "Down in the Willow Garden" and a nice floaty one on "Talkin' to Myself" and a flashy hot-lick one on "Dog Gone Shame"--it is all great picking. At first, I was worried that the addition of Simpkins would result in reduced guitar-time, but that doesn't seem to be the case. Kenny gets plenty of solo time and contributes some nice intros, too, especially on the spooky "Crime I Didn't Commit." The one thing I did miss though was an instrumental--all the tunes on this new release are vocals.

Rhythm-wise, the bass is the dominant instrument in the mix. I've always felt that electric basses tend to overshadow their acoustic bandmates, and that's no exception here. You can hear the rhythm guitar mostly when Kenny punches out a G-run but for the most part, the bass is the rhythm instrument, especially on the slower tempo songs. The up-tempo "Dog Gone Shame" and "Are You Ashamed to Call Me Darlin'" are notable exceptions and on these two cuts, especially the former, you can really hear the rhythm guitar and mandolin, and it seems like the bass is toned down a bit.

Of course, the name of the band is not "Kenny Smith's Lonesome River Guitar Support Band" and Bowman's bass is a large part of the LRB sound. Were this review in a more general bluegrass publication, I'd be giving it a high recommendation. I can still give it a high recommendation, but if you're looking for a strictly guitar-oriented bluegrass CD today, this ain't it. Tomorrow, though, you may be looking for a great band-oriented bluegrass CD and that's when you should pick this one up.

Liz Meyer & Mark Cosgrove
Regions of the Soul
Strictly Music CD SM-402

Reviewed by David McCarty

Put a great voice, exceptional songwriting, and one of the world,s top flatpickers together and you get "Regions of the Soul," a superb live recording by Mark Cosgrove and Amsterdam-based songstress Liz Meyer. Singing in a rich contralto that is at once powerful and delicate, Meyer imparts her original tunes with a rare depth of emotion and belief. Her best tunes, including the title cut, "Cecil," "Gone" and "Nothing But A Mighty Storm" reflect universal human themes in fresh, original ways. She's also a great rhythm guitarist, and also adds a wonderful accordion.

My all-time favorite gig is to play backup guitar behind a gifted singer and front-person. Mark steps into this role like he was born to it. Over and over, he's there behind Liz's vocals with just the right fill lick or bluesy chord substitution. Hearing Mark wail on his solos is a great lesson in how to invent arresting lead acoustic solos on original songs.

Mark also gets to step out on this recording, playing typically great instrumental versions of contest classics such as "Gold Rush." His Clarence White-inspired rendition of "Alabama Jubilee" rips through variation after variation as if there's no end to his ability to adapt and invert this timeless classic.

"Regions of the Soul" puts two gifted musicians on stage for a remarkable set filled with memorable original songs and vibrant, compelling guitar playing. Well worth the effort to find this one.

Song List: Gone; All You,ve Got To Do Is Go; Nothing But A Mighty Storm; Barbed Wire; If You Still Love Me Now; Alabama Jubilee; Regions of the Soul; Bad Seed; True Love; Jamaica; One-Way Rider; Angel of Paradise; Gold Rush; Sail On The Wild, Wild Wind; It Won,t Be Long; Cecil

Mark Cosgrove
Round Island
Noisy Neighbors Music NNM046

Reviewed by David McCarty

In our brave new world of great flatpickers, Mark Cosgrove is something very special. Winning the National Flatpicking Championships was just the start for this exceptionally talented guitarist. Building on his excellent debut island, "Good Medicine," Cosgrove displays not only an astounding technical prowess, but a sophisticated sense of musical taste and balance. He's mastered one of the hardest challenges facing a music - creating a musical sound and style that's unique while remaining true to their musical roots.

Round Island abounds with seriously stunning guitar work, often backed by the exceptionally talented musicians from Skyline (Tony Trischka on banjo, Barry Mitterhoff on mandolin, Larry Cohen on bass) and other greats such as jazz fiddler Matt Glaser. The title cut is an original tour de force for Mark featuring his lickety-split linear licks flavored with jazzy double stops and syncopated melodic figures. Mark,s tone is clear as a Colorado cascade, yet retains an insistent bite and punch that emphatically makes his musical point time after time.

Other instrumental tunes such as "Heel and Toe Polka," and the John Hickman/ Byron Berline classic "Ghost Dance" are fast without being overly flashy or losing sight of the melody. On Buck White's "Broken Dreams" Mark displays a gorgeous, languid tone dripping with emotion and empathy. This is a straight-shot into Mark Cosgrove's musical soul, and every guitarist who hears it will be richer for the experience. Reflecting influences from Doc Watson to Clarence White to Stephen Bennett, Cosgrove's guitar style throughout this recording is daring and fanciful, yet he manages to never put a note wrong or misplace an accent.

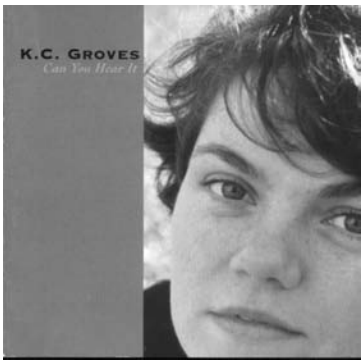
Those skills come into even greater play when he tackles two true jazz classics. "Limehouse Blues" is the kind of contest-dominating arrangement he,s famous for; lyrical, inventive and fast as a falcon in free-fall. Even more challenging is his flattop be-bop arrangement of Charlie Parker,s immortal classic, "Ornithology." He slides and glides through the tricky head like he,s copping sax licks inflection by inflection on his Collings. Dancing through the demanding changes, he manages to make Yardbird sound like he was writing these tunes for progressive acoustic musicians, not hard-core jazzers playing the back-end clubs of Harlem and Kansas City every night.

As impressive as Mark,s instrumental work is here, the vocal tunes offer another side of this talented artist. Although not a great singer, he delivers tunes like the Beatles, "Fixing A Hole" and Artie Traum's "Barbed Wire" very effectively.

Overall, Round Island has quickly become one of my favorite recent CDs. Mark, in my opinion, deserves the same kind of recognition players like Kenny Smith, Bryan Sutton and Tim Stafford are receiving. With wider exposure, this CD should go a long way toward helping more people discover this great guitarist.

Song List: Round Island; Barbed Wire; Heel & Toe Polka; Lucky Break; Ornithology; Maple On The Hill; Broken Dreams; Not In My Arms; Ghost Dance; Fixing A Hole; Limehouse Blues

K. C. Groves
Can You Hear It



Reviewed by Dan Miller

Let's say that you are a singer/songwriter from the Midwest and you want to cut a CD of your original tunes using mostly bluegrass instrumentation. Who are you going to get to be involved in this project? For starters, how about getting Charles Sawtelle to produce the project and play guitar on a few cuts (one of the last projects he was involved in before his untimely death), and why not get Laurie Lewis to produce the vocals and sing harmony along with Tom Rozum and Tim O'Brien. Oh yea, and for that sweet love song duet, let's get Peter Rowan to sing.

Now that the producers and singers are lined up, how about the instrumentalists? Since Tim O'Brien is already singing on the project, let's get him to also play some mandolin, fiddle, and bouzouki. And since Tim and Mark Schatz have worked a lot together, let's get Mark to play bass. Charles Sawtelle is already playing some guitar, but since he will be busy producing, let's lighten his load by getting Jim Hurst to play some guitar too. Now how about if we get Tony Furtado to play the banjo, Brent Truitt to play mandolin, and Sally Van Meter to play dobro?

Sound too good to be true!? Maybe—but K. C. Groves did it! This is exactly the line up on her 1998 release *Can You Hear It*, a project which was one of the last to be recorded at Charles Sawtelle's Rancho D'Ville Studio in Boulder, Colorado. Along with the all-star cast, K. C. plays mandolin, guitar, and sings lead on this recording comprised of her original material.

K. C. has a clear, distinct, sweet singing voice which is very pleasant to listen to and she is a talented songwriter. Her lyrics capture and keep your attention and, as you can imagine with the line-up of musicians and singers on this recording, the instrumentation and harmony vocals are outstanding. This is the kind of CD that stays in my CD changer. I have a six CD changer in the van and while most of the others rotate out frequently, I never feel like taking this CD out. It always stays in the rotation.

One of the nicest things about this CD is its musical, vocal, and lyrical variety. While with many contemporary singer/songwriter CDs it is difficult to distinguish one song from the next, each cut on K. C.'s CD is fresh and offers something new for the ear and the mind. The tunes don't all sound the same and the lyrics don't all revolve around the same worn-out topics. It is quite refreshing and thus continues to capture my interest after almost two years of listening to it.

One of my favorite cuts on this recording is "And the World Turns Around." Great singing, great song, great picking. Charles Sawtelle plays a short, sweet guitar solo that is just dripping with soul—pure Sawtelle. If you want to get a small taste of this CD, listen to "And the World Turns Around" appearing as the final cut on our *Flatpicking 2000* sampler.

Instructional Video Reviews

Western Swing Guitar Styles, Vol. 1 (TX-60) and 2 (92-G-15) by Joe Carr Texas Music and Video 800-874-8384

Reviewed by Bryan Kimsey

It's true that Joe and I both write for this magazine, but I assure you that little factoid will not stop me from writing my usual scathing, cutting, and no-holds-barred review. But first, let me tell you what a great guitar player, master of all styles, superb teacher, and all-around nice guy is Joe Carr. Now, with my criticism out of the way, let's get down to business!

These two videos were both produced at South Plains College where Joe is an instructor of some repute. Volume 1 focuses on "basic" swing chords and patterns, while Volume 2 gets into some more advanced territory with chord substitutions, fancy chords, and more difficult progressions. In Vol. 1, we get rolling and in Vol. 2 we step on the gas.

The two videos are very complimentary with good continuity and little overlap between them. In both, we're given fish to eat in the form of learning actual songs, as well as being taught to fish for ourselves when Joe explains the theory behind the chords he's making. He's also careful to point neat bass lines or internal voice movements that may have otherwise slipped past you.

There is a lot of material covered here what with substitutions, inversions, and improvisations, using numerous songs and common patterns as springboards. Even though Vol. 1 is more basic, I would say that both videos are aimed more to the intermediate/advanced player who has developed finger dexterity, knows where the notes are, and doesn't have to be spoon-fed his fish. Vol. 2 was made a few years after Vol. 1 and Carr starts off by answering some questions that viewers had about equipment. I found this to be a very useful section—all too often we're left wondering about strings and instruments and amp settings and such.

Production-wise, the videos are a little beneath the standards set by Mel Bay's more recent releases. The actual copy looks a little fuzzy, although the sound is fine. There are no fancy split-screen shots, but they're not really needed anyway since we're focusing on the fingerboard here. Chords are shown on screen using low-tech hand-drawn cards, but you can read them perfectly well—better, actually, than some higher-tech screen overlays I've seen in other videos. So, while the actual production isn't as smooth and polished as a marble slab, it's certainly good enough to get the material across to the student, and the material is what counts. Joe, as usual, does a good job of teaching that material, giving us new information, showing us how to use it, and relating it to what we might already know.

I already had a pretty fair of idea of Western Swing, but picked up a lot of information here and had a lot of questions answered. I think *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* readers will also enjoy these two videos, and I recommend them both to anyone looking for a crash course in "running the chords" in Western music.

You can call 800-413-8296 to order these videos from Flatpicking Mercantile.

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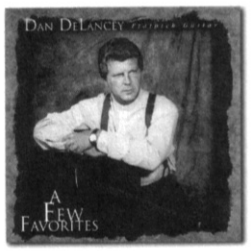

"Listening to him play, it is certainly evident that arrangement is something Dan does very well. His arrangements are interesting, exciting, tasteful and well performed."
—Dan Miller, Editor
Flatpicking Guitar Magazine

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Computer Software Review

Band in a Box 9.0c
PG Music

Reviewed by Van Hunter

PG music is the creation of Paul Gannon, who was trying to find a way to use his computer to play rhythm for him while he practiced his guitar. That simple idea has blossomed into what I consider the best practice tool available to all musicians and it is called Band in a Box (BB). This Windows/Mac based software is an automatic accompaniment program. Type in the chords to any song (like C or Fm7b5), pick a style, and press PLAY. BB then automatically generates a full backing arrangement of piano, bass, drums, guitar and strings. This allows you to, by typing in the chord progressions, quickly build up a library of songs.

In addition to chords, one could enter the melody by typing in the notes or using a keyboard or a midi guitar. You do not have to be able to read music to use this program. Entering a tune only takes a matter of minutes and is only done once since you would save the tunes to a file of your choosing. Now, whenever you want to practice you have a band that plays as fast or as slow as you want; it never gets tired and never complains and never laughs at your mistakes.

In addition to entering your own tunes you can download BB files from the internet or trade with friends through email. I have literally hundreds of tunes that I have downloaded, many with the melody included. Speaking of BB files on the internet, Dan Miller has indicated that soon he will have BB files on his web site for people to download. This is a great way to learn new tunes.

For anyone wondering if this is something they want to invest their time and money into, I would ask these questions.

1. When at a jam session do you find that your timing is maybe a little off?
2. Do you ever crash because the other folks are playing too fast?
3. Do you not go to jams because you feel you couldn't make it through the tunes?

If you answered yes to any of these, then working with BB will transform your playing. Everyone I have talked to that started using this program says it is the best thing they have done for their playing in years. If this article sounds like an advertisement, I do apologize. It's just that I feel all players have something to gain here.

Starting to use BB for the first time is relatively simple. Installation is a snap and playing your first song is easy too. By reading the instructions included you will quickly be up and running. However, this program does much more than mentioned above. Learning to do all the functions BB is capable of performing, will take some time. I have been using BB for several years now and I still don't know how to do everything the program can do. And to be honest, I don't really need or want to know how to do it all.

There are additional features, which as you quickly become familiar with the basics, you will want to use. One of my favorites is the soloist feature. Once you have learned a tune, press the soloist button and BB creates improvisations over your chord progression. Are they good? Well, yes and no depending on what you expect. There are lines that will really give you new ideas. Some lines sound like somebody just playing licks. But it does force you to think beyond the melody. The chord solo feature will create some very nice chord solos if the melody is there. It does this extremely well. And one of the best features is that these chords are displayed on a fretboard. The fretboard view displays the notes on the neck of the guitar for anything being played in the program.

In the notation window you can read either standard notation or TAB. What this means is any of the tunes that have a melody or improvisation present, can be read in the notation window as dots or numbers and can also be viewed on the fretboard. The melodist feature will basically write a tune for you. Enter the chords, hit melodist and BB will come up with a melody in the style you select. Or if you are really lazy it will create the chord structure as well. If you want, it will also name the tune for you. Another feature I like is the ability to record an audio file while BB is playing. I use this when I have come up with new version to a tune and want to save it so I won't forget it.

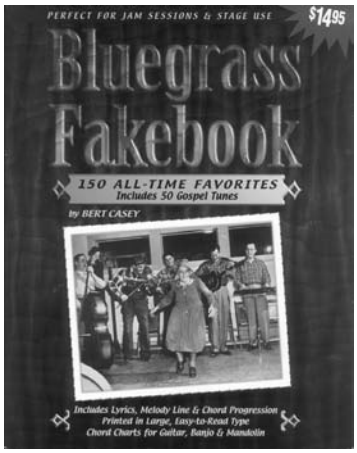
Did I mention there is a tuner included? This feature works like most of the digital tuners on the market today but does require a microphone to pick up an acoustic guitar. All in all there are too many features to mention in this article. If you are interested in learning more before you buy, then you can go to pgmusic.com and learn more of the details. But if you are like me and just want to practice more effectively then just get it and start using it.

When you go to buy BB you will find there are several packages available at different prices. This can be confusing trying to decide which ones to buy. For the flatpicker interested in fiddle tunes and bluegrass you find all you need is the basic version plus style disk #7. And a very nice additional add-on is Soloist #5. This Soloist disc will give you many soloist to choose from when you want BB to create a solo over the chords you have entered. Also included with this option is the Bluegrass Fake Book which has the chords, melodies and improvisations entered in for 50 standards. Dan Miller offers this package—Band in a Box, plus Soloist 5 (which includes the Jethro-bluegrass style), in the Flatpick Merchantile for $99. Different and more inclusive packages are available through Dan and pgmusic.com.

Basic requirements to run BB 9.0 are: Windows 95/98orNT, a soundcard and either headphones or stereo speakers. I recommend a Pentium or higher processor, but a 486 will work too, and 16MB of RAM. If you have any kind of a multimedia computer, it will work. I recommend a Pentium or higher processor. Almost all computers built within the last 5 years fall into this category.

Word Book Review

The Bluegrass Fakebook
by Bert Casey
Cassette & Video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by BERT CASEY
Includes Lyrics, Melody Line & Chord Progression
Printed in Large, Easy-to-Read Type
Chord Charts for Guitar, Banjo & Mandolin

Reviewed by Dan Miller

One of the most popular items in our mail order catalog and at our vending table at bluegrass festivals, the *Bluegrass Fakebook*, just got a whole lot better. The 150 songs are there as before (although the song selection has been updated to include more contemporary tunes, including 50 gospel numbers), the same easy-to-read type with words and chords are also still there, but the huge improvement here in this new edition is that the melody, in standard notation form, is also included. This is a big plus when you call out a tune at the jam session or band rehearsal that others don't know. They can look at the melody line and get a sense of where you are going while you are singing those large, easy-to-read lyrics.

The tunes here are arranged alphabetically for easy reference. All of the tunes, from "Ain't Gonna Work Tomorrow," through "Wreck of the Old 97" are first presented in standard music notation with the verse or chorus written out under the notation. The chord progression is also indicated with the standard notation. Next, the complete lyrics, with chord progression, is provided in large easy-to-read type. At the bottom of the page, Bert has also included a number of recorded sources for each tune.

In addition to the large selection of songs, Bert has included information about key transposition in the front of the book and he has also included chord diagrams for guitar, banjo, and mandolin in the back of the book.

If you find that you are forgetting song lyrics during jams, or if you and your jam session or band mates find that you get together, play two songs, and then look at each other and say, "What are we going to do next?" Then you are going to want to pick up this book. It is the perfect way to get everyone involved in the jam, easily remember song lyrics, learn new tunes, and keep the jam session rolling.

This book is available from Flatpicking Mercantile for $14.95. Call 800-413-8296 to order.

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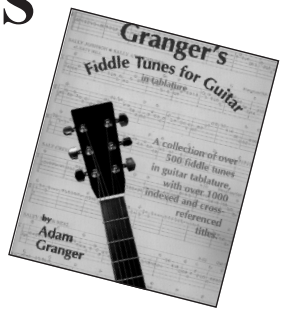
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Creating a Positive Practice Session

by Brad Davis

There are going to be mornings when you grab your guitar, sit down, try to pick, and think, "I can't play my way out of a wet paper bag! Maybe I should just quit!" Well, for your information, many music professionals, including myself, experience that same feeling from time to time! Even though I have experienced thirty years of playing the guitar, I still feel uncoordinated and stale from every now and then. The most important thing for me to remember to help me through those tough times is that when I'm not warmed up and feeling loose and confident, I'm gonna sound rough; and when I'm warmed up, well then, that is when I can judge my playing objectively.

If from time to time you feel like you are flubbing every note that you try to pick and your fingers feel like they are made of stone, then you may benefit from what I have to say about creating a "positive practice session." To create such a practice session is not as easy as it seems. One of the most important elements is a basic warm up routine to help you increase your control and confidence and the ability to focus on what you are doing.

If you have a warm-up routine that will help with your coordination and confidence, and you can remained focused on the fundamentals which you execute this routine, then the stage is set, (mind set, if you will) for a relaxed and creative picking session. This is why an organized practice regime is so important. If you can get to a confident and relaxed state on a daily basis, then you will improve at a swift and steady pace.

Anytime a player feels confident with his or her control then the mind is opened up and a sense of creative freedom is experienced. If you haven't ever felt this sensation then you should take a step back and check out your right and left hand technique to see if you are doing some things that might help improve on your control. Creating a positive practice session from the moment you pick up your guitar is the key.

Just for those who are wondering, a "negative" practice session would be playing things that are too hard for a warm-up, leaving you with no confidence of control, frustrated to the point that you couldn't relax if your life depended on it.

This reminds me of the first time I started learning how to snow ski, I can remember how uncomfortable I felt until I learned how to confidently control my actions coming down the slope (turning and stopping). Once I had some sense of control, then I could create, so to speak, my own style of skiing. Once I felt a small degree of confidence and control, I began to get out of my comfort zone and experiment. Getting out of your comfort zone can only happen when you attain that feeling of control and confidence. Once there, you can step out and expand your ability as a player.

Here are a few ideas for creating a positive practice session:

1) Start with something that is simple and easy. Simple scales, a simple arrangement of a fiddle tune, or even something as straight forward as strumming a chord progression can be used. Start out slow. Pay special attention to technique, timing, tone, tuning, and all of those critical fundamentals. The ability to really focus on what you are doing is critical to improvement. If you are mindlessly executing your warm-up exercises, then you are not going to gain full benefit.

2) Once you feeling a little loose, progress to playing something that is a slight bit more challenging that includes several different chord changes - Ex. G, C, and D. This could include strumming through chord progressions, practicing scales over chord progressions, or loosely "noodling." Again, maintain a focus on the fundamentals. Is your timing good? Are your notes clear? How is your tone? Are you in tune?

3) Now, to keep from getting bored, create something musical and original. Take the simple chord progression you worked with when you started the warm-up and try to improvise freely over the chord changes. This will help you loosen up a bit and start to have some fun. Having a drum machine or a computer program like Band In A Box would help here. Try to hear a melody line in your head and simultaneously pick it out on your guitar. This will help you gain experiential improvisational knowledge.

4) Now that you have started to get loose, begin practicing something that is somewhat of a challenge for you. It might be a new tune that you have been practicing, or an improvisation. As you move from the simple to the slightly more complex, try to remain focused on the fundamentals.

5) Now try a speed building exercise. Practice at a slow tempo to start, and then shift to medium tempo, and then to fast tempo, only to bring it back to slow, so you can check and make sure your practicing the fundamentals correctly. You can test yourself this way and determine if you are starting to get sloppy as you speed up. If you are, go back to the slow, clean version and slowly build the speed back up again.

As an example of what I may use as my personal warm-up: I enjoy starting with a cross picking pattern. I start in the key of G using the F position moved up to the third fret. I then pick the fourth string down, then the third string up, then the second string down, then the fourth again, but with an up stroke, in other words, keep alternating as you repeat the pattern- 4,3,2,4,3,2 and so on.

After that, I'll take the C chord, D chord, along with others and apply the same pattern until I feel control. I start slow and then speed it up and then slow and then fast and then slow and so on. I feel the cross picking is better for me, as a warm up, because I'm not playing any particular song, I'm just working on control. This can get boring and so I rotate the chords while using the pattern and once I start to feel some control, I start changing the pattern itself. Here is an example:

4,3,2,4,3,2, then 4,3,2,3,4,3,2,3,4, then 4,3,2,1,2,3,4,3,2,1,2,3,4 and so on. The crosspicking warm-up is one thing that has worked for me, but you may find that other exercises, patterns, or songs work better for you.

The key to creating a positive practice session is to start out slow and focus on the fundamentals. Don't move onto more difficult material until you feel you are in that comfort zone and that you are in control. If you try to play too fast or too complex too early, you will become frustrated and your practice session will not be as efficient or effective. Also, by taking time to concentrate on the fundamentals everyday, you will begin to ingrain those principles in your playing and find that your progress will be more rapid.

We all like to pick up the guitar and just noodle around or play through songs we already know just to have a break from the stress of our daily life. However, if you end up doing this every time you pick up the guitar, you are not going to make very rapid progress. I know that for many people playing the guitar is a way to relax and unwind so it is difficult to focus intently on serious practicing. You can certainly still do that, however, if you will dedicate a short period of time everyday to a positive practice session, you will find that you are able to improve quickly and it will be more fun and exciting for you.

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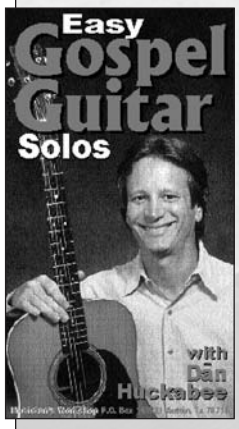

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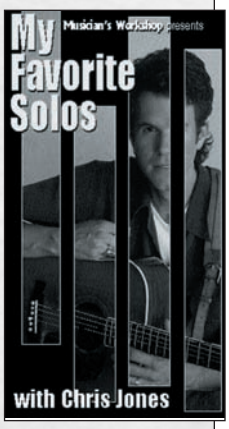

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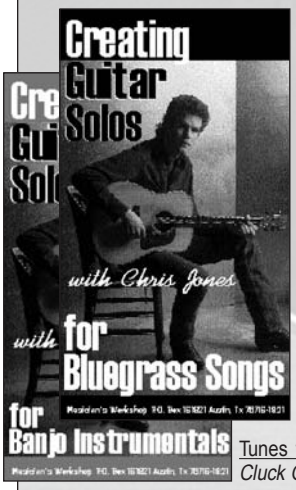

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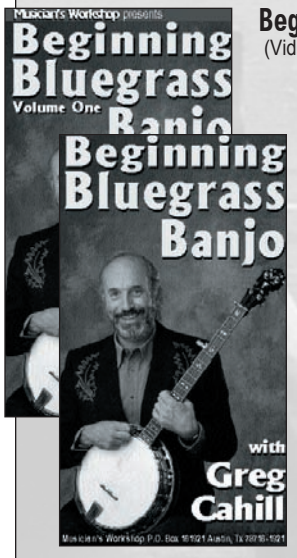

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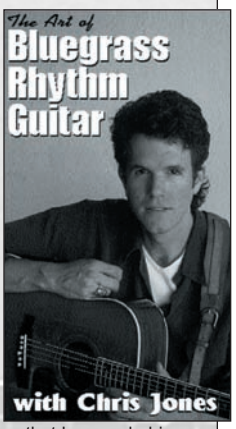

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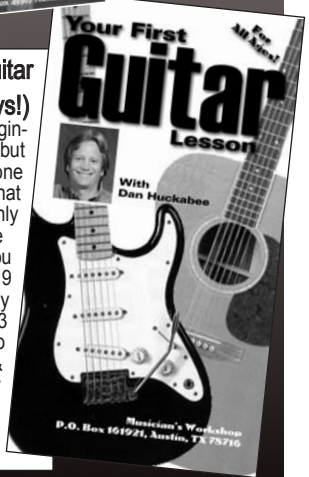

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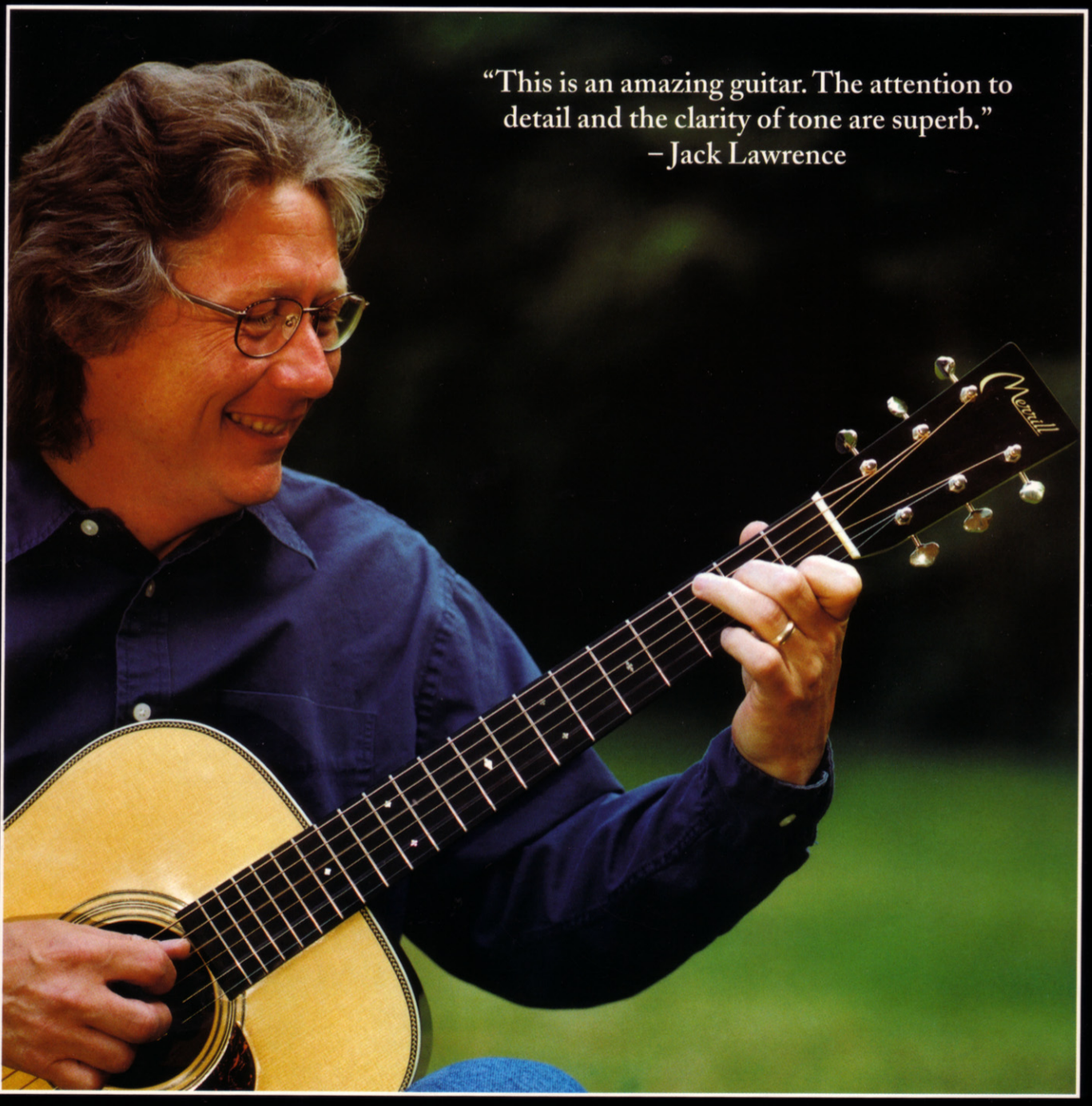

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"Doc's flatpicking blew my mind. I picked up on it, won a high school talent contest—and got hooked on performing. I always wanted a Martin. I heard about a man who actually had a D-45. I called him. He invited me over. Turned out he was head of Quality Control for another guitar maker. A week later they hired me.

"Now I own several Martins, and a few first-place awards. I look forward to performing with my Martins on weekends. I've been lucky enough to play with greats like Vassar Clements, Norman Blake, Bill Monroe and Doc Watson.

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